

Arnold E Loen

# Secularization

*Science without God?*

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# 1 · Introduction

Our subject is secularization. There are some subjects whose centre of gravity lies outside themselves and secularization is one of them. That is to say, the more we go into it the more the subject itself forces our attention on to what cannot be secularized. It is in the nature of secularization to be called in question; and no-one who considers the problem from a scholarly point of view – that is to say objectively – can avoid examining the origin of this question.

This means that here scholarly objectivity cannot be merely theoretical, detachedly observant and disengaged; it is existential. We shall see later that there is in fact no absolute distinction between theoretical and existential truth. But however that may be in general, there is no doubt that when we question secularization we are standing in an existential situation; and the reason for this situation, as for the question we put, lies outside secularization itself. Consequently there are here no primary, absolute standpoints, secure against existential assaults and questionings, from which we may form a cool outsider's judgment. We ourselves are put to the question and this fact belongs to the presuppositions of the case.

The question itself is unequivocal. It is the question of God. And it will be our concern to hear it as an unequivocal question, one which is moreover basic to our understanding and valuation of secularization, although it cannot of itself confer either understanding or valuation. We should mistake the real, factual nature of secularization if we were to try to bypass any ambivalence (even if it seemed irrelevant) or indeed any dialectic. Secularization is not self-sufficient; it has no independent existence. It is a dispute. And we should not run ahead of God in thrusting silence upon it.

What is secularization? We enter into the dialectic of its dependent relationship to God when we give the most obvious definition, *that secularization is the historical process by which the world is de-divinized.*

Of course we do not mean really de-divinized, as though God were at first actually present in the world and later withdrew from it; we mean de-divinized as far as human consciousness is concerned. Formerly, man was conscious of living in a world whose order pointed to God and in which God acted directly. Today that is no longer true; we are neither conscious of God in the cosmic order nor of his direct activity.

Is secularization therefore now within our grasp? How can we come closer to it than by a valid definition? We shall discover, however, that our apparently solid definition is not in fact valid and that when we put it to the test – the test of whether it really represents the truth – it melts away in our grasp.

Is it in fact true that for the human consciousness the world is now without God? Does the human consciousness really display itself so readily? And if so, where? In opinions directly stated in science or literature? In the theatre, the novel or poetry? And is a formulated opinion always in accord with the inner experience on which the conscious statement rests? Is it true that this consciousness – whether in its defined and expressed form or at its pre-definition level – points so clearly towards a de-divinization of the world? Was the situation ever very different?

Moreover, behind the question of the truth about the human consciousness, which is a historical question, there is the unqualified question of the truth itself. Is it true that God is withdrawing from the world? We have just said that of course we do not mean that. It is part of the dialectic of secularization that as soon as it comes too near home we turn its edge by giving it a social and historical form. Even then we cannot avoid the question of the truth, but it is now concealed behind the question of empirical historical interpretation. If we now wish to examine secularization in its essentials, however, we are bound to reject screens of this kind. Is it true that God is withdrawing from the world? Or is he still present, today as yesterday, still showing traces of himself in the cosmic order and still acting directly? Or was he never present in the world at all, as little yesterday as today? Did the cosmic order never point towards God and did he never act directly in it?

When we pursue the question in this way we find so-called secularization evaporating even more completely and in a different way. Secularization is concerned with the question of who God is. Who is the God whom we mean when we even ask the question: has the

world lost the divine presence in fact or in human consciousness? Is he really God, the Father of Jesus Christ, the God who speaks to us in the Old and New Testaments? Can we speak of secularization at all in connection with the true God, the God of the Bible? Is not God's presence in the world, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit different in kind from that on which doubt is cast by what we call secularization? If this were so, then secularization would be grappling with a fictitious God, the true God standing in a quite different relationship to the world from that which secularization postulates. In other words, the two historical processes of secularization on the one hand and God's plan of salvation on the other would have no common ground, and the whole of secularization would turn out to be a misunderstanding and misliving of the Gospel.

That this is in fact the case can be seen when we begin to examine the word secularization itself. It is obvious that its origin and use has something to do with the word *saeculum* in the Latin version of the New Testament. *Saeculum* is the word used to translate *aiōn*. *Aiōn* or *saeculum* generally means the temporal world as contrasted with the Kingdom of God (e.g. Gal. 1.4: *ut eriperet nos de praesenti saeculo nequam*). *Saeculum* can also mean a period affected for good or ill by the Kingdom of God (e.g. Matt. 12.32: *neque in hoc saeculo, neque in futuro*). The contrast of *hoc saeculum* with the Kingdom of God can thus even acquire an eschatological character, – *now* as against – *then*.

Thus within the framework of biblical thinking secularization could only mean becoming worldly or like this world (Rom. 12.2: *nolite conformari huic saeculo*<sup>1</sup>) – but it is an impotent worldliness which cannot hinder the coming of the Kingdom and which the Kingdom has in fact already overtaken through its coming. What secularization cannot mean within the biblical framework is de-divinization (although it could mean de-demonization – hence the ambivalence of secularization).

Now the disturbing thing is that no sooner do we think that we are rid of the problem of secularization – that it has taken flight in the face of the true God of the Bible – than the very same secularization which we have ceased to view as an enemy falls upon us from the rear. At the beginning we defined it as the historical process by which the world is de-divinized. Has then this process left the Bible untouched? Does not the Bible belong to the world too? Seculariza-

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller exegesis see Ch. 23.



tion is inherent even in our approach to the Bible. We know now that even the Bible did not drop from heaven but underwent a historical evolution. Various layers of tradition can be distinguished in the Old Testament and to some extent in the New; the canon is the final result of an editing process. The New Testament, and the Old too, belongs not only within the context of a historical process in time but also within a contemporary context. The context of the New Testament is the Hellenistic world with its religiosity, its syncretism, its Stoic and Alexandrian philosophy. The Old Testament stands in a relationship (albeit a critical one), first to the Canaanite nature religion and later to the civilizations of the ancient world (e.g. the Babylonian creation myths). Now the fact that we recognize the Bible's historical context (both temporal and contemporary) does not in itself mean that the Bible is affected by secularization. Indeed 'historical' criticism makes the biblical message more comprehensible, and the Word of God is not affected by the fact that God expresses it in terms that can be understood. But secularization demonstrates its intangibility by the way it lurks at our backs. It is a way of thinking and, more, a way of being-in-the-world. We are in its grasp when we interpret the indisputable historical context of the Bible in the light of historicism and thus see it as being determined exclusively by historical factors. For historicism, historical reality is complete in itself and God as a transcendent reality must be bracketed out. 'God' can only be interpreted psychologically, as the result of a religious projection, and the Word of God in the real sense ceases to have any meaning.

The secularization that lurks behind us, out of reach, in our dealings with the Bible is therefore a historical and psychological predisposition; but it also affects theology. We may think of Rudolf Bultmann, among many others, and his demand for demythologization. Bultmann does not apply the historical or psychological reducing process; he holds fast to the *kerygma* as the Word of God. But the reducing process that he does apply is that the Word of God can only contain the things that are relevant to our existence. Everything in the Bible that does not appeal to us existentially is myth. The Gospel must be cleansed of this mythical component and a reinterpretation of the biblical message is therefore necessary – a reinterpretation which will demythologize the Bible. But what now has to be interpreted away as myth depends in the final analysis on what we mean by 'reality'. Everything that does not fit into the reality is myth.

And for Bultmann 'reality' coincides with 'nature' in the secularized sense. But is this true only of Bultmann? We are speaking now of that intangible secularization that lurks behind us in our confrontation with the biblical message. Are we too bound to demythologize if we are to tackle this secularization seriously? Is the secularized world-picture of a godless nature true?

That is a brief outline of the aspects of secularization which we shall be discussing. They are, to take them in order:

1. The secularization of nature, considered under two headings:
  - (a) the secularization of the cosmic picture;
  - (b) the secularization of the biological picture.

Then:

2. Secularization in psychology.
3. Secularization in history.
4. Secularization in philosophy.
5. Secularization in theology.

The disadvantage of a programme like this is that it makes secularization too hard and fast, whereas we have just stressed its intangibility. Our definition – the historical process by which the world is de-divinized – melts away in our grasp, showing itself to be as questionable as the thing itself.

What attitude are we now to take up with regard to 'secularization' when we are not even sure whether it is true to talk about it at all? There are various possibilities.

The first of them is the fearful approach. This sees secularization as a fateful destiny which has overtaken thought, condemning the wonders of creation to be increasingly eroded and robbed of their glory by scientific thinking and technical practice. In this approach, thought is viewed as a joyless process of demolition that leaves intact only what can be rationally mastered. Truth is seen as what is left after demolishing, rationalizing thought has finished its work of demolition and rationalization. To the question what the residue will be – how little and how cold – this fear dare not give an answer. Its root is deference to the impetus which secularization received from the exposition of the self-sufficiency of nature offered by science and technology. The evolution of physics since the Middle Ages is an astonishing voyage of discovery – the discovery, as Kepler said, that nature is written in mathematics and that the writing is legible. But that is it: legible, not writable. We shall have to look again later at the

contribution of the physicist in the form of the presuppositions of his method. But the physicist himself is not conscious of his own methodological presuppositions; what he is probably overwhelmingly conscious of is the self-sufficiency of nature. Through the astonishing possibilities of his own science he is on the track of an objective conceptualness of nature. He must now try to identify his own concepts with this objective conceptualness, and the astonishing thing is that up to a certain point he is successful, although the objective conceptualness cannot be exhausted by the subjective concept. Is not the objective conceptualness which is so demonstrated the truth, and the one exclusive truth at that, the only one that there is? But the physicist himself no longer calls it truth at all; it is too matter-of-fact for that; he calls it reality. And that is how the hallucination arises that reality is nature, the nature of mathematics and physics – the approach of fear.

A second possibility is to accept secularization wholesale, without reserve. This is the attitude of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Rudolf Bultmann, both of whom insist on intellectual honesty.

Both these approaches imply that secularization is unavoidable. The first sees in it a terrible destiny; it is an attitude that really issues in the cry that Nietzsche puts into the mouth of the idiot: God is dead. The second sees in it the welcome end of an illusion. But how is such a positive evaluation possible? It is self-contradictory.

We shall not accept secularization as unavoidable. We shall refuse to do so in two respects. Apart from the question of the truth itself, we shall deny that secularization is an indisputable historical process; and as far as the question of the truth is concerned, we shall deny that this is represented by secularization. This does not mean, however, that we shall take up an antithetical attitude and combat it as a lie. That too would be to make secularization too hard and fast. The Bible's attitude to the world is also neither one of acceptance nor one of antithetical rejection. We shall confine ourselves to a discussion – a critical discussion – of certain aspects of so-called secularization. Where God is being shut out of the world by the absolute claims of cosmological, biological, psychological, historical or other categories we shall try to offer an alternative. Apart from this we cannot bind ourselves in advance to any particular method of procedure.



## 2 · The Secularization of the Cosmic Picture

The orthodox example of 'secularization' is the historical process by which the mediaeval Thomist picture of the universe was replaced by the modern one. This process extends from the thirteenth century to the present day and will probably continue. Here is certainly a contrast to fire the imagination – on the one hand the cosmic view of Thomas Aquinas and, following him, of scholasticism at its height; on the other the modern conception. There we have the mediaeval picture: a hierarchy of concentric spheres; here the modern: the result of an explosion. And between, as a transition, we have a historical process which we can follow in its precisest details – first a violent revolution with Copernicus, Bruno, Kepler, Galilei and Newton, and then a more gradual expansion of theoretical physics with a caesura at the beginning of our own century.

Yet it is precisely this most orthodox of examples that brings home to us the elusiveness of secularization. It is obvious that something is happening, but what precisely is it? Is it a movement of the mind, compelled by its own nature to fulfil itself in history – a kind of dialectical evolution, not in the idealist Hegelian sense or in the historically materialist Marxist sense but in the positivist sense of the progressive rationalization of scientific thinking? Is it, in other words, that inescapable destiny which we already saw to be the fear of those apprehensive of secularization? But if it is an inner compulsion, why does it only appear so late in history? Auguste Comte has an explanation, namely that the stage of rationalization is the third, 'positive' stage and has been preceded by two others, the theological and the metaphysical. But philosophically historical constructions of this kind are not convincing. We do not see a universal law unfolding itself in the whole of history. Or should we adopt Spengler's view? He divides history up equally into separate cultures, each of which

manifests the same development – rise, florescence and decline. In this case secularization would be a symptom of the decline of western culture. Spengler speaks of the stage of technical civilization. So this is again a philosophically historical construction in which history is subordinated to extraneous (in this case biological) categories and in which the question of the truth is eliminated by the very premises.

We shall thus abide by the question, what is actually happening in the ‘secularization’ which is taking place through the substitution of the modern for the mediaeval world picture? The disturbing, indeed agonizing, feature of this question is the suspicion that the Gospel could be affected. Does the disintegration of the mediaeval world picture mean the disintegration of the Gospel? The mediaeval world picture is simply not true. Is the Gospel not true either?

But is the mediaeval world picture essential to the Gospel? Is it its necessary framework? Here the ambivalence of the orthodox example of secularization – and the ambivalence of secularization itself – appears; for the cosmic framework of the Gospel as it was recorded during the first centuries belongs to the ancient, not the mediaeval, world. And the ancient cosmology is not entirely unequivocal. One thinks first of Aristotle of course, but in the first centuries AD, when the New Testament was being written, the picture was no longer purely Aristotelian. The dominant philosophy was then the Stoic, and the Stoic cosmology is much less hierarchical than the Aristotelian and mediaeval one. Moreover, the Stoic view is pantheistic. It lacks Aristotle’s transcendent God or Prime Mover. But it did envisage a pantheon of ‘powers’, which we also come across in the Pauline epistles. From this it is clear that, although obviously the New Testament message was set in the cosmic framework of its period, there can be no question of its having taken over that framework lock, stock and barrel. That was impossible, for the Gospel simply did not fit into it.

The mediaeval Thomist cosmos is thus a reversion from the Stoic picture to the Aristotelian one (with corrections). Is then the Aristotelian (and mediaeval) world picture more in accord with the Gospel, and does secularization in consequence assail the Gospel when it attacks this world picture?

There is, however, another possible viewpoint. Secularization can be regarded as an intellectual movement which, far from being an attack on the Gospel, was indeed only made possible by that Gospel. Holders of this view point out that in the New Testament the ‘powers’



are subjected to God and that as a result the universe is freed of demons and laid open to the Logos, the understanding. It is also pointed out that the createdness of the world implies that God has conferred on it a limited independence of being. And anything that has an independent being can be addressed and thus explored on the basis of this independence.

Even if it were true, however, that secularization was only made possible by the Gospel, the Gospel would not necessarily be secure against it. It could be that secularization, once set in motion, assails even the thing that made it possible. It does not follow that secularization becomes a dependency of the Gospel because the Gospel makes it possible. It could also be that secularization has its own sources and that these sources were blocked, and merely set free by the Gospel.

From the pros and cons of this discussion it becomes clear that such observations belong to the history of philosophy but provide no approach to the question of the truth. Yet as long as the question of the truth is not under consideration secularization remains elusive – neither non-existent nor something precise – and it is impossible to decide whether it is to be feared or welcomed. As far as the cosmic aspects of secularization are concerned, we shall deal presently with the truth question in the course of our examination of the modern world picture ('Reality').

Even if the orthodox example of secularization does not suffice to bring secularization within our grasp, it has none the less a certain value in bringing home its very elusiveness. The contemporary astronomical picture is familiar to us in broad outline; in order to bring out the contrast let us look at the Thomist cosmos.

Aquinas goes back to Aristotle. Not that the Thomist cosmos is a reproduction of the Aristotelian. It is less dynamic, but has an even more splendid order, both in the sense of hierarchy and in the sense of design. We must look first at the Aristotelian cosmos, however, because otherwise the basis for the Thomist one is lacking.

The fundamental principle of the Aristotelian system is development, the dynamic of ordered change. This is so much in the foreground that with Aristotle one cannot really speak of 'reality' but only of 'realization', at least within the cosmos. The primary entity is the concrete thing and the concrete thing is form realizing itself in matter. The form strives towards realization, towards actuality, but never achieves it, never being able fully to raise to actuality the potentiality of matter. In reaching reality or complete actuality de-

velopment would have reached its goal and come to a stop. But within the cosmos, being never comes to a stop. It belongs to the definition of cosmic being that it is part of the dynamic of evolution and that it is therefore in movement – not an arbitrary, purposeless movement but an ordered one. The entity is simply essence developing itself in appearance. It is still a question in Aristotelian interpretation whether this essence is the same as form, or rather the same as the whole of the form that is realizing itself in matter. In any event form, and consequently also essence, is not merely an occupied space but the inner organizing principle, such as, for example, the preformation of a plant in its seed.

There is consequently no reality inside the cosmos but only realization, ordered dynamic. The direction of this dynamic and the goal of this development is outside the cosmos. It is God (*ho Theos*), and only God is real, only God is pure actuality. God is the spirit resting within himself; self-contemplative in perfect felicity, he is motionless self-consciousness. God is pure form untinctured by any matter. He is therefore the only reality; the cosmos is being-in-coming-to-being.

But since God is reality, actuality, and hence rest, motionlessness, he cannot exert any moving power on the cosmos. God is not *causa movens*. In order, as *causa movens*, to set something else in motion, God himself would have to move. Again, because God is reality, pure actuality, and therefore not bound to matter, he cannot move the cosmos in the way in which form organizes its own matter: God is not *causa formalis*. He is, however, *causa finalis*. He moves the cosmos because he is desired, *kinei hōs erōmenon*, and in this way God is *to prōton kinoun*. We saw that the movement of the cosmos consists of an inner evolution or dynamic whose direction is God. He directs and thereby causes this evolution, not by any outgoing activity, but through the desire of the cosmos for the perfection and bliss which in him is reality.

Up to now, however, we have neglected to mention the most important feature of this evolutionary process within the cosmos. We have viewed evolution as the development of the concrete thing (*tode ti*), thinking primarily of single organisms – this or that plant, this animal, that person and so on. That, however, would be an atomized evolution – here the development of one individual, there the development of another. Aristotle, however, does not see the cosmos as a conglomeration of different evolutionary processes but as one single continuous development. Evolution always leads from the

lower to the higher. If, therefore, the cosmos is in a state of continuous indivisible development, this means that within the cosmos itself there is a hierarchy of lower and higher, in the form of a graduated scale. Just as Plato established a hierarchy of Ideas, culminating in the Idea (*idea* or *eidos*) of the Good, so Aristotle laid down a hierarchy of forms (*morphe* or *eidos*) culminating in the highest form, God (with the difference that whereas in Plato all *eide* are transcendent, in Aristotle only the highest *eidos* is). To be more precise, it is a hierarchy of form types, the order being element, mineral, plant, animal, man, planetary Intelligence, God. This hierarchy of form types of course corresponds to a hierarchy of the concrete things in which the forms realize themselves – a hierarchy of the individual development processes.

But with this, conceptual demands are not satisfied. A scale of individual development processes means individual development processes side by side, or rather one above the other. It is still not one continuous development process. A static hierarchy is still not a continuous dynamic process. What is needed if we are to speak of a continuous development is for each degree in the scale of categories to develop in the direction of the degree above it. If we also wish to involve this continuous evolution in the scheme of matter and form, then any particular category must be viewed as matter for the degree above it and as form for the degree below. This is in fact Aristotle's view. The element is matter for the mineral, the mineral is form for the element; the mineral is matter for the plant, the plant is form for the mineral, and so on. Thus Aristotle sees a unified dynamic development stretching from completely undetermined matter (*protē hylē*, *hypokeimenon*) to pure form, or God.

Now this last link is also the weakest in the Aristotelian chain of development. We see the development of the individual plant, but not the evolution from plant to animal. The fact that many animals use plants for food and that plants similarly use minerals is an argument, but not a very convincing one. Recourse to Darwinism would land us in a conceptual fog. We see the hierarchy of forms, but we do not see the continuous dynamic. The continuous dynamic stretching from rung to rung of the ladder is a metaphysical surplus that has its origin in one of Aristotle's basic convictions. Moreover it is conceptually untenable because it cuts across the clear division between matter and form.

It is here too that the difference between the Aristotelian and the

Thomist world picture is to be found. It is a relatively small area of divergence compared with the high degree of agreement. Aquinas takes over from Aristotle the doctrine of the concrete thing as the realization of form in matter. He also accepts the hierarchy of forms, giving this even more emphasis than Aristotle. But the continuous cosmic dynamic retreats into the background. With Aquinas the cosmos becomes a more static hierarchy. Aquinas's main conception is order (*ordo*). This change is due to the fact that creation has now taken the place of the Aristotelian cosmic dynamic.

After this introduction we can now outline Aquinas's world picture without stopping to emphasize the points that are specifically Thomist.

The Thomist conception is of order according to the graduated scale or ladder that reaches from the earthly to the heavenly.

This is true in the first instance of the non-spatial hierarchy of forms: element, mineral, plant, animal, soul, angel.

It is also true of the spatial divisions of the cosmos: in the centre the motionless, spherical earth, and round it nine concentric ethereal spheres. This spatial order is based on two principles:

(a) There are four elements: earth, water, air and fire; and there is also ether. Each of the five has its natural place – the earth below, the ether above, and the others between – water on the earth, the air above the water. In the sublunary sphere the order is imperfect so that there are deviations from the natural position of the first four elements. The sublunary is the area of evil and sin.

(b) The 'fixed stars' have a completely regular circular movement. This is due to the fact that they all move in an ethereal sphere (the eighth) concentric with the earth. This ethereal sphere is – like the others – transparent. It turns regularly on an axis through its centre, preserving the same position as a whole. This movement must be upheld, for according to Aristotle a movement stops if it is left to itself. Aquinas leaves it undecided whether this ethereal sphere of the fixed stars is moved directly by God or through the intermediary of an angel.

In addition there are the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The movement of the five planets appears to be slightly irregular, but since it is impossible for a heavenly body to perform an unheavenly movement, the apparently slightly irregular movement must be a superposition of various regular movements, namely perfect rotations. If we for the moment ignore the daily



rotation, a planet moves regularly in a circle (epicycle) whose centre moves regularly, at a different speed, in a second circle and so on, it may be, in a third, fourth, fifth or even sixth circle. The final circle (deferent), which has the greatest radius, is concentric with the earth; it is the orbit which is described by one point of one of the seven inner ethereal spheres. This whole must then be superimposed on the rotation of the ethereal sphere of the fixed stars.

From the point of view of the Copernican system (which was incidentally already known to Aristarchus in the third century BC; he describes the movements with the help of a system of coordinates based on the sun) such a description is clearly possible by means of a system of coordinates based on the earth. It will be remembered that the radius vector earth-planet is the vector sum of the radius vectors earth-sun and sun-planet for the inner planets; and correspondingly the vector sum of the radius vectors sun-planet and earth-sun for the outer planets. Here some other circles (epicycles) are necessary in order to take account of the deviations in form and position of the planetary orbits.

The Thomist *ordo* (the ordered hierarchy or scale) applies in the third place, however, to the perception which begins with the sensual and rises to the spiritual.

It applies to morals: Aquinas worked out the scale of virtues in its finest minutiae.

It applies to social life in the order of church and state.

It applies to salvation, in the scale of nature and grace.

It applies to angelology: Aquinas discusses a minutely worked out hierarchy of angels. Since in the case of angels matter as *principium individuationis* is lacking (the angel being *forma separata*), the individual is also the species. It might be said that the order here is *principium individuationis*.

### 3 · The Secularization of the Biological Picture

We have done no more than introduce a discussion of the cosmic picture, outlining the Thomist view with the aim of bringing home the contrast to the contemporary astronomical outlook. We need not elaborate the latter as well. We must, however, give separate consideration to the biological picture, which belongs together with the cosmic one. We shall then come to the main point – a critical examination, not of astronomy or biology, but of the contemporary astronomical and biological viewpoints; and a consideration of how far they may be said to have been secularized.

Let us therefore first consider the (questionable) secularization of the biological picture. Here too we shall confine ourselves to an introduction, again limited to a consideration of the contrast between the biological world picture before and after this (possible) secularization.

We shall place the 'before' at Linnaeus, c 1750. Linnaeus, as is well known, was the great classifier of living forms. We can sum up the biological view about 1750 in a sentence: forms of life have remained fixed since the creation. Linnaeus was convinced that his classification, with its division into genera, species, etc., was a repetition of the divisions made by the Creator on the third day (or at least that it summed up the variety which the Creator planned should follow the crossing of the individuals he had just created). Everything was as it had been from the beginning. *Tot sunt genera et species, quot ab initio creatae sunt*. Linnaeus was a botanist, but the same naturally applied to the animal world. Here too the genera, species, etc., had remained constant from the beginning. And the same thing was true of man since the sixth day.

Here too it is not as easy to fix the beginning of secularization as it seems. The Thomist cosmic picture was destroyed by Copernicus,

but Aristarchus was already the Copernicus of the ancient world. We say that the Linnaean biological view was destroyed by Darwin; but the ancient world already had its Darwin in Empedocles. Empedocles (450 BC) held the view that through the chance mingling of elements, separate limbs and organs could doubtless from time to time have been formed; and that in even more occasional cases these limbs and organs could have combined to form complete organisms. Most of such organisms would have been monsters and not in the long run viable. In a few instances, however, organisms would have been formed which were viable and capable of reproduction; and these forms of life would have persisted. Incidentally Aristotle was also a Darwin – or super-Darwin – of the ancient world, accepting as he did spontaneous generation. He believed experience to show that midges and all kinds of crawling creatures develop spontaneously from the dunghill. This opinion is still found in the Middle Ages, with Aristotle as authority. The starting-point of biological secularization, the fixity of species, was thus not so unchallenged as it seems.

Up to now our discussion has run parallel to our previous investigation; but here the analogy stops. There is a modern astronomical world picture, but modern biology offers none. True, the Linnaean view was completely overthrown by the doctrine of the origin of species, but Darwin's theory did not result in a clear, new world picture for all that.

Since we have therefore no clear destination, our introductory discussion of the secularization of the biological picture will now have to take a different course from our discussion of the astronomical viewpoint. This time we shall have to pursue the process of secularization (if it is that) through all its difficulties. This applies to Darwin's theory of descent. An analogous discussion of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton was not necessary because in that case there were no doubts about the revolutionary process itself; the problem was whether the process was one of secularization and how that word was to be interpreted. Here, in the sphere of biology, the revolution itself is questionable, as well as, of course, whether it involved secularization and what we are to understand by that.

The facts which caused Darwin, to his own consternation, to doubt the fixity of biological species since the creation and which led him to his theory of the origin and evolution of species were as follows:

1. The experience of breeders. It is impossible to breed new species of animals or plants, but new variations can be achieved.

2. Islands which were long isolated – even the continent of Australia – have their own flora and fauna. The kangaroo is peculiar to Australia.

3. Fossils. A fossil is a calcined skeleton embedded in limestone. Now every fact includes theory, and that is the case here. A fossil's age and the time that has elapsed since its formation is determined by various methods, including the geological investigation of the age of the rock in which the fossil is found. Today this geological estimate is confirmed by methods derived from atomic physics.

By studying fossils and rock strata of various ages, palaeontologists gain a systematic outline of the transformations in animal and plant life during the past hundreds of millions of years. The picture is common knowledge: at the beginning, only primitive aquatic animals of which a few still survive while others are extinct; later, monstrous amphibious creatures, now extinct; later still, terrestrial animals. In the course of these changes new species constantly arose, last among them man.

The question now arises, did this transformation which took place in the plant and animal kingdom in the course of these hundreds of millions of years occur gradually or by abrupt transitions? The answer, curiously, is that the small changes occurred gradually and the large ones abruptly. It would seem that new species arise all at once (abruptly), whereas within a relatively stable type there are slow (gradual) transformations. Thus in the transformation of a particular organ or limb belonging to a certain species – for instance a horse's hoof – there is an important series of intermediate forms so that this transition appears more or less steady. (Absolute continuity is obviously impossible because the number of individuals is finite.) On the other hand hardly any intermediate forms are found between species, so that the occurrence of a new species appears to be abrupt. This does not necessarily mean that the new species really arises all at once, or abruptly. It could be that one species is transformed relatively steadily into another, but within so short a time geologically speaking – a few thousand years – that the transition period provides few fossils and that these have therefore not been found. Another possibility would be for the apparently abrupt alteration of species to be due to intervening geological changes so constituted that no sedimentary rocks, and thus no fossils, could be formed.

Darwin's theory rests on these facts, with the exception of the last,



the apparently abrupt formation of species. Darwin's theory necessarily assumes that, on the contrary, one species evolves more or less steadily from another, that is to say through the agency of a great number of intermediate forms differing only slightly from one another. This is, as we have seen, not impossible. But it is at least a weak point in Darwin's theory that at a key point it is forced to interpret a phenomenon in its opposite sense.

Darwin's theory is common knowledge: *natural selection through the survival of the fittest*. The child shows slight differences from its parents. These differences are inheritable; when they are passed on to a third generation still other differences are of course added. Moreover, the differences are fortuitous – small, fortuitous, inheritable variations. Now individuals are involved in a struggle for existence, individuals within a species as well as the various species themselves. A great many individuals are born, but the environment offers too little room, too little food and too little sun, air and water for them all to survive. Statistically speaking, those individuals least capable of living will die – normally before they can reproduce themselves. The result, again statistically speaking, will be that the unfavourable variations will be eliminated and the favourable ones will be passed on to the following generation. The variation from one generation to the next is very small but in the course of many generations all these small variations add up (because, being favourable, they all tend in the same direction) to an alteration so large that we must speak of a new species.

Some weak points in this theory are immediately obvious.

1. The point mentioned above: that fossils do not show the change from one species to another by small gradations (variations); they show the sudden appearance of a new species by an abrupt transition.

2. Change is so prominent a feature of the theory that it is hard to understand how relatively stable species can occur. If everything remains in a state of constant modification it must be impossible to pick out species with relatively fixed characteristics.

3. The number of possible variations, starting from a given individual, is very large. The number of possible combinations of variations, starting from a given individual, is greater still. The number of possible combinations of variations, starting from the varying individuals of the same species, is greater again. Only a small fraction are favourable, but even this small fraction of a great number thus raised to a higher power will be enormous. Darwin's theory would therefore

lead us to expect that the modifications to any one species would stream out in a million different directions and, moreover, that none of the new species emerging from the earlier one would be distinguishable, or that if they were distinguishable there would be millions of them.

4. It is inconceivable how a complicated organ such as the human eye could develop through an accumulation of variations. Until it has a complicated appropriate structure it does not function as an eye, is therefore not yet a factor in selection and consequently does not come into existence.

5. The premise that variations are inheritable is essential to the theory. This premise has proved false as a general rule.

Apart from all these detailed objections there is another consideration of quite a different character to be lodged against Darwin's theory (although at a closer glance this objection overlaps the territory of the others). Darwin's theory is a *mechanical* one with an organic tincture. The organic tincture is present because the theory is concerned with organisms and an organism cannot be conceived of in other than organic categories. The theory itself, however, is mechanical and uses mechanical categories. This can be justifiable. If a lump of rock falls on an organism and destroys it, that is a mechanical occurrence. But to deduce that the *origin* of species is a decidedly mechanical occurrence on the basis of the *existence* of organisms is a violation of the thinking processes which simply must be recognized. The origin of species is not comprehensible – as far as the origin itself is concerned – in terms of purely mechanical categories. These play a part – life has its mechanical aspects – but the mechanical categories can only be found in the context of organic ones.

What are organic categories? An organic category implies the conceptuality of whole and part (part, not piece; piece is mechanical), of appropriateness (biological appropriateness does not imply conscious purpose), etc.

Darwin's theory is concerned with the variations that arise in the course of reproduction. Reproduction is only conceivable in organic categories, but Darwin's theory turns it into something mechanical. It stresses only one thing about reproduction – that one relative persistency is replaced by another similar one; the theory leaves everything else, with its organic content, unnoticed.

Darwin's doctrine can therefore be called a theory of origin, or

better still, of selection, but not a theory of evolution. Evolution is a biological category, whereas Darwin's theory deals with mechanical ones.

Of course, in view of all these discrepancies, Darwin's theory has not remained unaltered. The most important of the alterations is doubtless the replacement of Darwin's fortuitous inheritable variations by De Vries's inheritable mutations. De Vries's experiments showed that in reproduction abrupt variations far greater than those which Darwin hypothetically assumed can occur. But (apart from the mutation of neutral characteristics) such abrupt mutations relate to the whole organism. If, namely, a vital characteristic is abruptly altered in an existing organism and everything else stays the same, that organism is no longer viable and ceases to be an organism. A mutation is thus a *biological* category whereas a Darwinian variation is a *mechanical* one. Consequently absorption of De Vries's mutation theory into Darwin's doctrine of selection means that the latter is 'biologized'. The assumption that the mystery of life can be rationalized in mechanical terms no longer belongs to the presuppositions of the theory in its altered form. The presupposition of original Darwinism was the absurdity of a life that only behaves mechanically.

What is now the position with regard to the secularization of the biological picture?

Darwinism in its original form replaces life by mechanism. It is true that the life of men, animals and plants is not divine in itself; but if life is to be a mechanism then the biblical use of the word life is meaningless. And the word 'life' plays an important part in the Bible, frequently being associated with the word 'spirit', among other things. Darwinism in its original form was thus a wholesale secularization. The contemporary doctrine of selection, however, has absorbed the mystery of life and its character of wholeness and appropriateness into its premises. It is therefore not clear why it should stand in contradiction to the biblical conception. What then is left over from secularization in this field? Really nothing more than the warning not to misread the Bible.

Linnaeus believed that species had remained fixed since the creation. The contemporary theory of selection *knows* that the earth is thousands of millions of years older than life on earth and that the different species did not arise simultaneously. And it *conjectures* that the later species were not completely new but developed from previously existing ones. It conjectures further that in the development of

new species from earlier ones mechanical factors also played a part, even if this conjecture is surrounded by many question marks. If the biblical concept of creation involves the notion that the whole of creation took place in one indivisible moment and that species have been fixed since then, the contemporary theory of selection will place us in a conflict. But is this not a false reading of the Bible?

## 4 · 'Reality'

We began by considering the alleged secularization of the cosmic and biological world pictures. Each of them finds its expression in a science, the first in theoretical physics (in which we may include astronomy and chemistry, which employ the same categories), the second in biology (which cannot exist without organic categories). Later we shall consider secularization in the fields of psychology and history. Here too we have corresponding technical disciplines – psychology (particularly the psychology of religion) and historical scholarship.

It has already become apparent (and we shall find it further confirmed later on) that what is called secularization leads in different cases to results of varying clarity. The modern cosmic picture is clear: we live on a planet that revolves round the sun; the sun belongs to the galaxy, which is only one of billions of stellar systems; and the earth on which we live is not the centre of a cosmos of concentric spheres. But we cannot speak of a modern biological world picture; here no clear result has emerged.

Since we are concerned with secularization *per se*, however, when we consider it in one specialized field after another we are in danger of no longer seeing the wood for the trees – of losing sight of the thing as a whole. It is as a whole, therefore, that we shall now look at secularization, and in the course of our investigation we shall proceed to examine its truth. This critique will be of use in our evaluation of secularization in its specialized aspects.

We have defined secularization as the historical process by which the world is de-divinized as far as human consciousness is concerned. (This is a wrong definition which could be the dialectically correct expression for the wrong thing.) The menace of secularization would then lie in the fact of a world without God, and the process of secularization would be the slow and painful penetration of the truth

that the world – the world including man – is indeed without him.

What is the world? We are now speaking of the godless world of the modern consciousness of life and not of the world in the biblical sense. According to the modern consciousness the world is not godless in the negative sense of being deliberately against God, but in the empty sense of being without him. God plays no role at all, either positive or negative. According to the modern consciousness there is no God outside the world either, for a God outside the world would burden it with the negative attribute of his absence.

Instead of talking of the godless (or 'god-free') world it would in fact be better to say 'Reality'.<sup>1</sup> Let us now look at the role that 'Reality' plays in the modern consciousness. This consciousness is not just what everybody thinks, it is not an explicit opinion and perhaps nobody would be prepared to admit to it. Yet we all feel its pull, and when we find the word 'Reality' on our lips and consider what we mean by it we may get a shock, discovering that it is in direct contradiction to what we have always believed our consciousness of life to be. The elusiveness of the modern consciousness is in fact the elusiveness of secularization. Secularization is the break-through of the opinion that the modern consciousness is probably right.

What is 'Reality' for the modern consciousness? It is the total of the effects of the one on the other, or rather the total of the mutual effects of the one on the other. What 'the one' or 'the other' is we cannot exactly say. 'Things' would be too one-sided. Even 'things, people, animals and plants' would still be too narrow, since these are all complex sub-wholes of effects. 'Electrons, protons, neutrons, etc.' would be nearer to the truth, but even these are only provisional. The basis of effects within 'Reality' thus remains undetermined. But it is these effects that are the important thing. Together they build a complete system, round off 'Reality' into a whole and make it a closed circle in as far as no effects can be brought to bear on it from outside. For if effects can be brought to bear from 'outside', this outside would not be outside, it would be part of the whole. The effects which unite themselves, and thus reality, in a closed whole are to be considered as similar in kind; otherwise they could not form a whole. Everything, everything that is real, including men with their thoughts, belongs to 'Reality'.

<sup>1</sup> [As will be seen on p. 29f. below, the author distinguishes between two uses of this word, one of which he characterizes by the emphatic use of the definite article. This has been replaced in English by the initial capital letter in each case. Tr.]

'Reality' for the modern consciousness is thus the complete and self-contained whole of everything real. The cement of this whole, that which fuses it into a unity, is made up of effects, causality. The whole includes time. 'Reality' is not in time, but contains time within itself.

In saying that this is reality for the modern consciousness, we are not thinking particularly of science, but rather of the pre-scientific background of the whole of life. This reality is the non-conceptual ontological background, not only of science but also of the corporate life of society and family; and the truth of it is thus the dreaded or heroically accepted final end of secularization.

*Our critical attitude towards secularization will be based on the conviction that 'Reality' is non-existent, a fiction.*

In order to grasp this we must look carefully at certain points.

'Reality' can mean two things. In the first place it can mean 'Reality' as we have just discussed it. We shall try to demonstrate that this meaning is fictitious. Secondly, it can mean the characteristic of being real. What does 'being real' mean?

Let us suppose that we think something is 'real'. Now suppose that we later discover that we were wrong. We are then forced to annul our acknowledgment of reality. Does this mean that the something which first appeared to be real has now been shown to be nothing? Is annulment the equivalent of annihilation? The answer is, certainly not. Reality is not the opposite of nothingness.

This point draws our attention to something else: acknowledgment of reality takes place within a particular framework. A thing identifies itself as real because it can be incorporated into the framework. This proof of identity always has a provisional character, however. If it later proves impracticable this does not mean non-incorporation, but the necessity of finding another, this time legitimate, incorporation. If there is not anything there which is to be met with within this framework, the question how the incorporation takes place does not arise either. Negation of reality is not recognition of nothingness, but a re-examination of the apparent incorporation on the basis of the fact that the proof of identity does not work out. So much for the meaning of 'reality' as the character of being real. This meaning is: the capacity for incorporation in a reliable given framework.

<sup>1</sup> For such a framework we will coin the technical term *cadre*. By *cadre* we mean a conceptual system (either objective or subjective conceptuality) as a framework into which a given thing may be fitted, so that this capacity for incorporation constitutes its reality.



We then come to the other meaning: 'Reality' as complete totality. This 'Reality' would then be the single framework or cadre into which everything would fit. We are bound to consider in all seriousness whether this single, all-embracing cadre really exists.

Our knowledge is confined to the individual cadres of the different specialized disciplines and to what we may call the familiar, accustomed cadre of everyday life – though to call it this is only the soothing fencing-in of a great mystery.

The cadres of the individual disciplines – theoretical physics, astronomy, and chemistry; biology; psychology; history; sociology; economics; etc., are of varying degrees of fixity. Firmest of them is the cadre that embraces theoretical physics, astronomy and chemistry (all three forming a single cadre). It is true that even this cadre is not at a standstill. The theory of relativity and the quantum theory were revolutions. But these revolutions have not pushed aside all earlier physics as untrue; they have absorbed it. No-one doubts the adjudgment of reality through physics – within the limits of the development of physical theory. That is what we mean when we say that the cadre of physics is the firmest. The adjudgment of reality through physics is much more reliable than that, say, through psychology, where revolutions are not of such a kind that older theories can be absorbed by the new.

Because the cadre of physics is the firmest, the demand is sometimes made for other disciplines to adopt its way of thinking so that they may be equally certain, firm and reliable. This is the approach of a certain wing of neo-positivism. Its watchword is 'unified science'. Taken literally, that would mean that all other disciplines should turn into theoretical physics. In that event, theoretical physics would be the one all-embracing cadre into which everything else could be fitted. This cadre would then be 'Reality'.

We need not waste many words on this. It is nonsense to suppose that all disciplines could turn into theoretical physics and it is nonsense to suppose that all adjudgments of reality could be akin to those of theoretical physics. The system of theoretical physics cannot be the one, universal system.

What, then, can 'Reality' mean? The only remaining possibility is for it to be a cadre in which all the other cadres of the different disciplines could be incorporated. It would be a cadre for other subordinate cadres, not for things.

This may be postulated as a theory, but if it cannot be demon-



strated it remains the purest fantasy. And nothing points to the possibility of any concrete method being capable of uniting the various branches of knowledge in a single super-cadre. There is not the slightest evidence for it. So this second attempt to rescue the significance of the one Reality also falls to the ground.

Above all, this one Reality cannot be the accustomed, familiar cadre of everyday life. It is true that, waking and dreaming, we are continuously building into a cadre. It is true that the presupposition behind this act is the fascinating identity of being and being-thought. This building-in (i.e. adjudgment of reality) is even secure in as far as it is concerned with normal occurrences. There is, however, no given cadre as a whole into which we are building. And thus 'Reality' as the accustomed cadre with which 'one' deals also remains the postulate of the fantasy. Yet it is precisely this, tricked out with the nimbus of methodological certainty and propagated by the marvels of modern technology, which plays the part of 'Reality' for the modern consciousness.

We are bound therefore to arrive at the dispassionate conclusion that 'Reality' in this sense does not exist – in the sense, that is, of the self-sufficient totality of everything that is real into which, as the one given cadre, everything can be fitted. Yet this one Reality is clearly the meaning of the end of the process of secularization. If 'Reality' does not exist, then secularization loses its meaning too. And thus secularization becomes evasive.

Up to now our criticism of secularization has been purely negative. Have we nothing positive to set against it? The subject cries out for it, for if nothing can take the place of a unified reality then everything falls apart into fragments. And that surely cannot be the truth.

The unity for which we are seeking is unity in God, that is to say the unity which is given through God's saving activity. This activity comprises creation, reconciliation, redemption, consummation. This is the cadre that includes everything, among other things the cadres of the various specialized disciplines.

To say that is not a relapse from the sphere of scientific thinking into the sphere of faith. It is not that the concept of 'Reality' belongs to the sphere of scientific thinking, from which we exclude ourselves by talk of the saving activity of God. Scientific thinking is not spun out of its own entrails; it is built up from presuppositions. (We shall return to this point.) These presuppositions of rational thinking in science cannot themselves be justified by reason; they are

thus in this sense scientifically groundless. This is as true of 'Reality' as it is of God's saving activity. Neither of them is susceptible to justification by reasonable proof; both are material for faith. For all that, 'Reality' is a false presupposition (and thus not one at all in the real sense), whereas the saving activity of God is the true one.

God's saving activity forms a very different cadre from 'Reality' and places us in a quite other dimension. Reality was substantially the same as the subjects of the various scientific disciplines. Each specialized science examined one piece of reality. The natural world of theoretical physics in particular was a homogeneous piece of reality. In relation to the saving activity of God, on the other hand, the idea of substantial sameness of kind cannot even arise. Yet the substance of nature is not removed from God's saving activity, for that activity embraces creation. It is true that the unity which, as the true unity, takes the place of 'Reality', is not creation alone; the substance of history, for example, would then be excluded, although this is certainly covered by the divine saving activity as a whole.

The saving activity of God forms a quite different cadre from 'Reality' in another respect also. The idea projected as premise in 'Reality' is one of thought that has become quiescent, for which all questions have been solved. But these questions must then cease to persist. 'Reality' possesses the lifeless harmony of an object that can be conceived. God's saving activity, on the other hand, not only makes human thought possible; it embraces while it surmounts human actions, belief and states of mind. Moreover, God's saving activity is the warranty for the harmony of completion, but it assumes the disharmony of evil and sin. It makes thought and science possible but allows neither of them to become quiescent.

If then the saving activity of God forms the cadre – as it does according to the Bible – then there is no 'Reality' and the world only exists in the relative independence conferred on it in creation as an object for that saving activity. Consequently, to say that the world is 'de-divinized' is a contradiction in terms. Secularization as de-divinization may possibly be a fact as far as human consciousness is concerned, but this is a secularization which we cannot take seriously.

## 5 · The Limits of Rational Thinking · 1

Now that we have exposed the phantom of 'Reality' we are left with a very different picture.

Reality is no longer the one absolute totality of which every specialized science investigates a piece, as physics, for example, investigates nature. In that case nature would be a piece of Reality. But since the one reality is a *homogeneous* cohesion of effects, nature, as a piece of this homogeneous reality, actually embraces the whole of it. It is then impossible to conceive what other pieces (or parts of reality) could be left over. They would have to be different in kind from nature, for if they were the same they would also belong to the sphere of physics and would thus in fact be nature. But since 'Reality' is a homogeneous cohesion of effects they *cannot* be different in kind from nature. No pieces can therefore remain outside. Consequently there is no room (or piece) left for any other discipline other than physics. Every other sector of study could only behave 'as if'; its terms would have a purely regulative, not a constitutive, significance (Kant). All this is implicit in the silent premise called 'Reality'.

We have tried to do two things: first to bring the conscious mind face to face with this silent and unconscious premise; and secondly to expose it as baseless and mistaken. This exposure could not of course take the form of proof – the truth or falsity of premises cannot be proved, since these underlie the proof itself; but it took the form of confrontation with the biblical premise.

The biblical premise is God. We may add – because here a misunderstanding is apt to creep in – the concrete God, Father of Jesus Christ, author of the saving process in which Israel has its specially elect place, creator, mediator, redeemer, finisher. Here too, in the biblical premise, there is unity: the one God; but the one God who is triune; not a substantial unity, but the irreducible duality of

Creator and created. Here too there is harmony, a creation which was very good and the consummation in which God will be all in all; but there is also the incomprehensible interlude of sin. Nevertheless it is not the dualism of a good and an evil principle. Sin is not God's independent antagonist.

Creator and creation, reconciler and sin, redeemer and evil – these are no homogeneous contrasts which allow of a higher unity. What shall we call that all-embracing framework, that mental sphere in which God, the world and sin are thought? We can only call it *being*; but, as we have said, this is not a higher unity in the sense of mediaeval extreme realism, which held concrete particularization to be a division within the unity of being. Unity of this kind is not postulated by 'being' in the biblical sense. Being is the being of God; and God is in his primal essence this same concrete God, neither being-in-general nor the particularization of a God of antecedent being. And when we say that being is the being of God we are immediately confronted by a mental obstacle; for there is also a being of created things, which is not as such the being of God, and there is a being of sin; so that being has no common denominator.

Within this sphere of being, neither harmony nor disharmony, lie the cadres of the various scholarly disciplines. Each of them – at least each of the specialized sciences – has its own special presuppositions within this *common* presupposition. These special presuppositions are of various kinds, have different positions in the sphere of being and are of varying range. This is a contrast to the presupposition of 'the one Reality'. 'The one Reality' presupposed a homogeneous cohesion of effects, and homogeneity allows for no essential differences among the particular presuppositions. All exact sciences are based on experience, and in this case experience is so conceived of that it is related to 'Reality' and shuts out God, finding him unnecessary even as a definition. Now, however, that 'Reality' has been replaced as a presupposition by the non-homogeneous sphere of being, the position is changed. The special presuppositions of the specialized sciences are not *a priori* insulated against God. The science of history in particular goes back to the historical conception of the Bible. We will return to this point; but at the moment our task is to accustom ourselves to the view that the cadres of the specialized sciences are not pieces of 'the' one Reality, together forming the whole, and with a tendency for physics to push out all the others. The cadres are rather the mysterious orders which can be traced within

what we have called the sphere of being. 'Sphere' because thought can move within it; of 'being' because the unity of the sphere is not the unity of a substance but the unity of God, whose being is Being itself, while there is also a being of created things, willed by God, and a being of sin, condemned by him. Being is a unity which baffles thought. It is not a conception which we control and find a place for among other thoughts. Being does not anticipate God; God – this same concrete God – is the first and being is the being of God; and yet God has also willed a being of creation in relative independence of himself; and yet there is the being of sin, not willed by God though not God's eternal antagonist. The cadres of the specialized sciences do not absorb this sphere of being, but they are paths within it. Two questions arise here. First, what is the relative position of these paths, i.e. what is the relationship of the sciences to one another? Secondly, what is the position of each and every path within the sphere of being? We shall devote most of our attention to the second of these questions.

In order to examine the position of the paths, i.e. the cadres, the specialized sciences within the sphere of being, let us first see whether we cannot remain within specialized science. The specialized sciences themselves have no conviction that their cadres lie within the sphere of being. The ideal of science is rational thought – thought, that is, that can account for and vindicate every step that has been taken. It would seem as if this rational thinking in science has kept it steering towards a self-sufficient (and thus closed in) unity. It is this which produces the problem of so-called secularization: science cannot look beyond its own horizon. Or rather, the scientist gets the impression that scientific thought is self-sufficient, complete within its own boundaries. His attitude is determined by the hallucination that there is nothing conceivable outside the realm of his own science. Of course he knows very well in theory, like everyone else, that his own science is not the only one, but here presuppositions are stronger than better knowledge, and have a traumatic effect on the attitude to life.

Our preliminary question is therefore: is it true that rational thought is so self-sufficient that its basis belongs to the realm and competence of that same rational thought itself? Is it true that a specialized science can build up a self-sufficient whole and can therefore be understood on the basis of itself alone?

In one respect this is patently not the case, for subject as well as

object is necessary for rational thinking and for science. In other words, not only the matter which is being rationally considered is present; there is also the person who is doing the rational thinking. Not only are there facts by means of which rational thought can account for and vindicate its processes; the person who thinks rationally also belongs to the fundamental principles of rational thinking. There is no question of rational thought in a specialized science also covering the subject of the science, i.e. the rationally thinking person. To take an example, mathematics does not recognize the person who is practising mathematics. It is only in anthropology that subject and object coincide; but then anthropology is not a specialized science. The specialized science is therefore not self-sufficient, if only because it does not cover its own subject, man. The presuppositions with which a specialized science works are not the presuppositions of human existence.

Although this is of decisive importance, it does not make much impression. The scientist is absorbed in the thing that he is investigating; nothing else exists for him as far as his technical thinking is concerned. The fact that he himself exists in and outside what he is doing, that he eats, drinks and sleeps, plays no part in his scientific thought. Although only a minute proportion of the population are scientists, this attitude of mind has penetrated the general consciousness. The real question is thus whether the *area of investigation* of a science is a complete self-sufficient whole, or in other words whether rational thought is self-sufficient in what it thinks.

Now the rationality of thought consists in its ability to explain and justify every step that it takes. Scientific thought is only self-sufficient if it can do this without any qualification. Explanation and vindication take the form of reasons given for a particular contention. The question is thus, can rational thought give the reasons for every step that it takes? Is the rationality of a science unlimited or are there certain demonstrable boundaries where thought (and thus science) is forced to encroach on another sphere?

Rational thought has in fact certain limits (that is, the rationality has limits, not the thought). For the sake of clarity we shall set them out apodeictically and develop them afterwards.

The limits of rationality are set at the point where thought is no longer capable of giving conclusive explanations and vindications. This is the case when it ceases to be able to give cogent reasons. Thought is unable to give cogent reasons:

1. for the validity of its own reasoning powers,
2. for the presupposition that the datum is knowable,
3. for the direction which thought must take.

In order to understand this properly we must go back a stage and inquire what thought really is.

There is an indissoluble connection between *thought*, *knowledge* and *truth*. We *think* in order to know; we *know* in so far as *truth* is arrived at.

What is truth? The Greek word *alētheia* gives us an indication. A thing is true which is *alēthēs*, that is which *mē lanthanei*, which is thereby unconcealed.

Thought strives to move in the direction of knowledge; knowledge is achieved in as far as the thing about which we are thinking is unconcealed. If the thing is unconcealed it is manifest. What, however, is the starting-point of this movement of thought towards knowledge? Is the starting-point the complete concealment of the thing? But that is impossible, for if the thing is absolutely concealed we cannot think about it at all, because for us it simply does not exist. It is therefore impossible to give a starting-point for the movement of thought. At every stage the thing which is being thought about is already partly unconcealed and manifest, and thought moves, or at least strives to move, towards greater unconcealment. Consequently thought in all its stages is already partial knowledge and thought is, or at least strives to be, the act which leads towards fuller knowledge. The difference between thought and knowledge is indicated in these two expressions 'at least strives to be' and 'act'.

Knowledge can be more or less partial, but to the extent that we know, the thing is unconcealed; and to the extent that the thing is unconcealed, we know. On the other hand, thought can go wrong. It strives to move in the direction of fuller knowledge, but it has no guarantee that it is doing so. It is possible for thought to move towards *less* unconcealment instead of more. We have already seen that a thing cannot be absolutely concealed in the process of thought because thought can only take place on the basis of partial knowledge, striving towards more but not always succeeding.

Before we proceed further, we must correct two partial truths in what has just been said. It is impossible to say everything at the same time, besides which the list of concepts for which words have been coined is particularly inadequate in the case with which we are dealing.

The first partial truth was that we spoke of 'the thing'. It is true that thought can be centred on one particular, pin-pointed or demarcated thing or set of facts; but the thing so demarcated is none the less connected with an unlimited field of circumstance. Thought is capable of moving through this field and it is by this movement that the other movement towards greater unconcealment takes place.

This brings us to the second partial truth. When we speak of 'less' or 'greater' concealment or of 'partial' or 'fuller' knowledge we should not think primarily in terms of quantitative differences; the picture should rather be of the clearing of a mist. Light is shed on a particular matter by the movement of thought through the field of circumstance.

As we have seen, it is not that knowledge moves from nil to a particular amount. It has often been so interpreted and a false theory of knowledge developed in consequence. Kant, for example, held that the nil-point of knowledge was the material of sense impressions before this was conceptualized and ordered through the categories of reason. These sense impressions were thus the data which were transformed into perception and thought through the cognitive process. The positivist theory of knowledge also holds that sense impressions are the data and sets itself to study the psychic mechanism whereby this data is processed.

It was possible to start from the nil-point of knowledge in this way because after Descartes the subject was conceived of as a self-given, but almost entirely closed in, inner world; only sensory impressions could penetrate from the outside (which was not itself datum), and from these impressions thought had to reconstruct the outer world.

The process of knowledge which begins at no time and no place, has no nil-point and can lead from less to more complete knowledge allows of no mechanical explanation. The fact that a thing can become unconcealed and that the act of thought can lead in this direction can only arouse our wonder; and there is no mechanical explanation 'behind' the fact which can remove this sense of wonder. There is indeed something behind it which is accessible to reflection. But reflection does not take away the wonder, it only deepens it into gratitude. There are of course questions which we can put without *metabasis eis allo genos*. We shall even have to ask ourselves how it happens that thought results in greater unconcealment. In the course of this examination the concepts of data, the means of thought and the direction that thought can take will become clearer.



## 6 · The Limits of Rational Thinking · 2

What does the unconcealment of a thing mean? It means that we have a conception of the thing and can express it. In short unconcealment = utterance or, more explicitly, truth = unconcealment = utterance.

The utterance is as much a cause for wonder as the unconcealment. The linguistic philosophy of the neo-positivists does not recognize this wonder. It sees words as nothing more than signs. Words as the elements of language are signs, each of which represents an element of the thing. The syntax of words in a language must represent the syntax of elements in the thing. Of course this does not quite work out in a historically developed language; but a concrete statement is only possible to the degree in which it does so. This is the view of a particular type of neo-positivism<sup>1</sup> but it does not do justice to the cognitive phenomenon. It is inherent in this phenomenon that the thing itself has its own utterance – even if there were no knowledge or thought whose immediate expression is an echo of the utterance of the thing. It is in this that the inextinguishable wonder lies. The concept is not an external description of the thing; the thing itself is conceptual. We could now go further and ask in what language the thing is to be found to be uttered – we shall call this the ontic utterance. It is this ontic utterance which is the target of the immediately thinking speech which is carried on either in a historically developed language or in an artificially constructed one, such as logic or mathematics. And the answer would be, in the language of the Holy Spirit; or perhaps even more primally, in the language in which God uttered the words of creation. This answer can take away our wonder at one blow; if the wonder remains we stand in front of an insoluble mystery.

We will go further: the thing becomes datum, is made manifest,

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. 18.

through being uttered. Now we have already seen that thought attempts to advance from lesser to greater revelation and thus from incomplete to more complete capacity for utterance, from incomplete to more complete participation in ontic utterance, from incomplete to more complete data. The datum therefore does not stand in front of thought as the static preconceptual material of sensation; it is rather that which has already proved itself to be true in the process of knowledge. The datum is thus, *together with* the process of knowledge, in a state of growth. Since the proof is never absolute, there are gradations of reliability in the datum. There are theories in every discipline which give the impression of being incompletely established and waiting for further study; here the datum is not very reliable. On the other hand there are sectors where one can hardly imagine that the concepts which have been worked out will ever be completely superseded; here the datum is more reliable. Every datum has thus the character of being derived from something simply indisputable which would thus be the datum in the real sense. But what it is in actual point of fact no-one can say. Perception? But anyone who is at all familiar with scholarship knows that there is no perception apart from scholarly theory. The material of sensation? Apart from our earlier counter-argument, the material of sensation is the artificial product of a process of abstraction which removes all utterance from the thing. In this case the datum would be the non-conceptual; but then where does the concept come from? Obviously not from the datum. It is also false to see sense impressions as the basis of all knowledge. The undifferentiated cannot be the basis of the differentiated.

Thought is thus the act which works within and on the datum, attempting to trace the ontic utterance and to express it directly. How, it may be asked, does thought work within and on the datum? This can be seen in every specialized discipline but the answer differs in each case, since each discipline has its own methods. One can only examine the methods and so arrive at a partial answer to the question (of how thought operates on the datum). It can only be a partial answer, for we always come up against the mystery of participation in the ontic utterance. How this participation comes about is unanswerable. We cannot even establish whether in any given case we are participating in the truth and if so to what extent. Such participation is a gift and there is no way of establishing incontestably that we possess it. The notion that our thought, scientific and non-scientific,

is not entirely removed from the truth belongs to the sphere of *faith*.

Now it is not that the ontic utterance itself – the truth – is conferred on us over the head of toiling science. It is not truth that is the datum but the thing in its provisional degree of unconcealment. And we have seen that this datum is not static but increases with the progress of science. We have seen further that the datum is not everywhere equally reliable but that there is a core of complete reliability within it, although it is impossible to say what this core is. We asked how thought works within and on the datum in order to increase in quantity and quality. We answered that this varied from discipline to discipline but that any light that we can shed on the process only reaches as far as the mystery of participation in ontic truth. Here we must take up the thread again. It is true that thought operates within and on the data in different ways in the different disciplines, but the variations have none the less a common factor. In every discipline, thought operates *by means of its own independent instruments*, which are among other things *the rules of logical association and the categories*.

At this point we must at once get rid of a misunderstanding, namely that the categories are an inherent part of thinking, being eternal, pure and fixed *a priori* patterns of thought. This was Kant's view. According to him, the process of knowledge has an established structure, independent of experience and thus *a priori* fixed; namely, first intuition, with its forms of space and time, and then thought with its pure intellectual concepts, the categories. On the one hand stands, therefore, the structure of knowledge, with its independent instruments of thought, and on the other the non-conceptual material of sensation. Thought would then consist of the active operation of these independent instruments of thought on the given material of sensation; it would consist of the ordering of this material.

We have also said that thought consists of the active operation of the independent instruments of thought within and on the data. But the independent instruments of thought do not belong intrinsically, *a priori*, to the subject as a fixed structure. Nor is the datum the non-conceptual material of sensation, as we have seen. What is the position with regard to the independent instruments of thought?

The independent instruments of thought are, among other things, the rules of logical association and the categories. Let us turn our attention to the second, as being the most important.

Categories, as the name suggests, are predicates, assertions, and

moreover both together – the asserted and the assertable or, more correctly, the utterance and the quality of being utterable. But not every random assertion falls under the technical term ‘category’. A category is a general, fundamental utterableness – not always completely general but at least general within the cadre of a particular specialized discipline. Some of Kant’s twelve categories are examples (e.g. unity, totality and, above all, causality), but not all of them (reality, for example, is not a category). As regards causality, this is not general, at least not in Kant’s sense, for there is more than one causality. The causality of mathematics and physics is different from biological causality and different again from historical causality; and it is impossible to debate a general, all-embracing causality whose specifications are those we have named. There are, however, many other categories beside the ones named by Kant. Their number cannot be determined and there is no guiding line whereby we can deduce them all, *a priori*, neatly arranged in tabular form.

Categories, then, are partly general, fundamental utterablenesses. If we ask what is uttered we must answer, the object. How far can categories then be said to be ‘independent instruments of thought’? Well, thought cannot pursue its purposes without an existing language. We have stressed that truth = unconcealment = utterance. We asked in what language that utterance was to be found and could only answer, in the language of the Holy Spirit – an answer which ultimately confronted us with a mystery which we are now in a position to name. It is the mystery of the existing (pre-scientific *and* scientific) language’s participation in the language of the Holy Spirit. The existing language contains utterablenesses with which we work and which are thus independent instruments of thought, and which yet simultaneously are an assertion of the object, the thing – so that in them we know the thing as object. We have seen that this knowledge is partial, and it is only by by-passing the cognitive process that we can establish that it is in fact participation in ontic truth.

It is obvious from this that categories are by no means crystal clear or sharply defined, that their deepest foundations must remain unelucidated, and that they are not immutable. To take an example, physics is impossible without the category of mathematico-physical causality. We can, however, try to go into the category in depth, i.e. to find other words to express what causality is. This is never completely successful, for even though we work more or less accurately with the category (within and on the datum) we still do not know what

mathematico-physical causality really is. And when we try to express what it is, the result of our efforts is different from what it was a century ago. The category therefore changes. Obviously it is not the ontic utterance (or utterableness) that changes, but the nearness of our approach to it. We must therefore distinguish between the ontic categories, which are the partly general, fundamental utterablenesses within the ontic utterance, and the gnostic categories, which are conjectures of the ontic ones. These *gnostic* categories consequently belong among the instruments of thought whereas the ontic ones do not.

Categories are therefore *objective* in as far as they are partially general, fundamental expressiblenesses which are again parts of the ontic utterance of the object; they are *subjective* in as far as they are partially general, fundamental expressiblenesses in which the subject believes that he is participating in the ontic utterance.

These gnostic categories are *instruments of thought*. They function in the cognitive process before they themselves become an object of reflection and independently of any such possible subsequent reflection. The category of mathematico-physical causality, for instance, functions in physics long before we inquire what that causality really is and is quite independent of our insight into its nature. This example also shows that the categories are *a priori* with regard to their application in thought and science. Physics and chemistry are applications of this category to the datum. It is a general principle, therefore, that the category precedes its scientific application but that reflection on the category or knowledge of it do not; reflection and knowledge follow the application of the category. We can therefore take over Kant's expression *a priori*, though only in a less absolute sense. The fact that the (gnostic) category is *a priori* in respect to its application does not exclude the possibility of its alteration in the course of that application. The ontic category, on the other hand, is *a priori* in respect to knowledge.

Every specialized discipline has its particular categories. These, as we have already said, are all fundamental from an epistemological point of view. Ontologically, however, there is a gradation; some special categories of a science are more fundamental, others more subsidiary. A constitutive category, the most fundamental type, may be among them, as for example the category of mathematico-physical causality in physics. Each of the specialized sciences has its own history, most of which are largely familiar to us. We can therefore trace

the development of the special categories of a particular science; though not from nil, for we have seen that thought is always already on the move in its operation in and on the datum. Any discipline emerges gradually, both logically and historically, from the concept of everyday language and it has no sharp, determinable beginning, least of all (logically) in any non-conceptual datum.

The conceptuality of colloquial speech, however, is a vast and incalculable field of utterablenesses. The specific categories of any specialized science form a particular path within this field, a road leading in a certain direction, a method. Not every road within this field is, however, negotiable. One cannot start off in any random direction within the field of everyday concepts. One cannot artificially create any category one chooses and use it as an instrument to attack the data. This is seldom successful. A specialized science can only come into being through the successful operation of a particular basic category (or system of interrelated categories) in and on the datum; and even then it only gradually emerges whether the operation can maintain itself, whether the datum yields itself up, whether the method proves fruitful and whether astonishing new insights appear, revealing new possibilities. Only experience can show whether this is the case.

A science cannot therefore be planned out in advance by the choice of categories, independent of and apart from the virtual data, as an arbitrarily chosen direction among endlessly many possibilities. Moreover, as we have seen, the specific categories of a particular discipline become more precise, change and deepen with the progress of that discipline; and this means that it is not only at the (undeterminable) beginning that a certain direction is taken, but that the choice must be repeated at each point in the development of the discipline. The later choices are to some extent guided by earlier 'success', but this is not decisive. What may be called 'intuition' must play a part. On the other hand, there is hardly any guidance at all for the original choice of direction (from the conceptuality of colloquial speech); here everything depends on the lucky stroke of intuition.

The use of the word 'intuition', however, may be called the refuge of ignorance. The original choice of direction within the field of the utterable, which is so amazingly successful and cannot be put down to a gamble of trial and error, remains rationally undeducible. The history of any particular specialized science shows that it begins (relatively speaking) with a *methodological idea*. This methodological

idea is a somnambulistic confidence which cannot justify itself and which is not even conscious of itself; it might be called an urge towards scientific puberty. Thus in its beginnings during the Renaissance, theoretical physics stammered about 'reading the book of nature'. The methodological idea has a somnambulist's accuracy; it might be called a design, but not in the sense of a conscious fabrication; it is a compulsion, though no-one can say where it comes from or to what it tends. Equally astonishing and undeducible is the steady crystallization of the methodological idea into the specific categories of the specialized science.

All this should contribute to a proper understanding of what we have called the limits of rational thought. To sum up:

1. Thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the validity of its own independent instruments. These instruments were, among other things, the rules of logical association and the categories. We have seen that it is never certain whether the categories with which we work, scientifically and non-scientifically, are ontic as well as gnostic.

2. Thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the presupposition that the datum can be known. The datum does not depend on us; what guarantee have we that thought will be able to penetrate it successfully?

3. Thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the direction which it has to take. This is the point which we have just discussed.

Where thought can no longer give cogent reasons, it is rooted in what can only be called, in the fullest sense of the word, faith.

## 7 · The Limits of Physics

It was tempting to call this chapter 'the De-secularization of the Cosmic Picture', but such a heading could be misleading. If secularization means de-divinization, then de-secularization could mean divinization; and the intention of saying this is the worst thing that could be imputed to us. The world is not divine. Secularization as the de-divinization of a divinized world was and is part of the Gospel. But the world is the creation of God, the concrete God, Father of Jesus Christ. If secularization as de-divinization means that the world can no longer be recognized as creation, or that the word creation becomes meaningless, then it is contrary to the Gospel.

Furthermore, the specialized sciences cannot demonstrate that the world is God's creation. What they can demonstrate, however, is (1) that science does not imply secularization; and (2) that the pre-suppositions of science itself derive from what in the fullest sense can only be called faith. We have given the arguments for this in general in earlier chapters.<sup>1</sup> We must now apply them to the specialized science which is competent for the cosmic picture – astronomy.

The cosmic picture is that of contemporary astronomy. Now we have certainly no intention of denying that astronomy is a specialized science; but in this case the word has a slightly different meaning from the one that we have given it up to now. By 'specialized science' we have understood hitherto a discipline which consists in the application of a certain constitutive category or group of inter-related categories and which can be traced back to a methodological idea. If we use the expression 'specialized science' in this sense, then astronomy is a particular, distinct part of a specialized science, namely of theoretical astro-chemico-physics, which includes physics, chemistry and astronomy and, to be really precise, a few other sciences as well, such as mineralogy. But it does not include all 'natural' sciences; above all

<sup>1</sup> See Chs. 4-6.



it does not include biology, which has a different methodological idea from the group of which we are speaking. In order to avoid cumbersome terminology, we will call the group, under which we are now including astronomy, simply physics.

We have already shown that nature is not a piece of 'Reality' and that physics is a cadre within the non-homogeneous sphere of being. The question is now, what is the position of this cadre within the sphere of being? And this involves the further question, what is the methodological idea of physics and in what constitutive categories is it embodied?

The methodological idea cannot of course be precisely paraphrased since it is more an 'urge towards puberty' than a concept. We have already given an indication of it with Kepler's phrase about 'reading the book of nature'. He added that nature was written in mathematical symbols and this addition already contains the germ of the coalescence of the methodological idea into a constitutive category. The constitutive category is namely mathematically expressible causality: the connection between cause and effect which can be expressed in a mathematical equation.

We have already mentioned that this mathematically expressible causality is not the only one. It is the causality which determines the progress of the method of physics (within the sphere of being). Other specialized sciences work with other causal categories. Thus biological causality is structurally different from historical causality or the causality of physics. But it is not only the scientific causalities which differ from one another. One of all these different forms of causality is the causality of human action and above them all is the causality of the activity of God. The questions that arise are obvious: if we speak of forms of causality does not that imply that a causality, as a logical genus, must be definable in principle? And how does this logical genus relate to the causality of divine action? These questions are closely connected with the ones that arise over the being of creation and the being of God. The sphere of being is after all the sphere of God's saving activity.

Within this sphere, the methodological idea of physics, progressively coalescing into the constitutive category, has made a path for itself – or should we rather say, has found one? Neither is in fact correct. If we say 'has made a path' it suggests that the path's direction was arbitrarily chosen and might have been quite different. Yet if we say 'found a path' it suggests that the path was already there

and, once taken, automatically determined the direction of the progress of physics. Neither is the case. It is astonishing that physics, that is to say this path within the sphere of being, is possible. And it is no less astonishing that this possible path, invisible though it is, has continued to be found up to the present day. It is the opening up of a road blindfold, a road which at every point only leads in a single direction.

With this, we have already applied to physics the third of the limitations of rational thought which were mentioned above: that thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the direction that it has to take. It can choose at every point in the sphere of being from any number of directions, but in the midst of this endless multiplicity there is only one direction which points along the possible path of the science and which makes this possible way the one which is in fact taken. Nor is there any decisive criterion whereby to decide in advance what the direction will be. There is not even a decisive criterion with which to decide subsequently whether the proper direction was in fact taken. The only indication is continued success in the formation of physical concepts and in physical experiment.

Now it is true that thought has no guarantee at all that experiment and the formation of concepts *can* go on succeeding. In other words, physics has no guarantee at all that the path that it has travelled so far has a possible continuation. The third limitation of rational thinking (which we have here taken first) was the lack of cogent reasons for the *finding* of the possible continuation. The second limitation, here applied to physics, has to do with the lack of cogent reasons for the *existence* of a possible continuation. That possible continuation can only exist if the formation of physical concepts can be successfully continued in such a way that it is confirmed by experiment. It is by no means a matter of course that this will be the case. On the contrary, though the way or method shows how astonishingly successful the indication was, it is quite possible that the path taken by physics up to the present is proving itself, at the point reached today, to be a cul-de-sac. If this is in fact the case, physics would not only fail to succeed further *in fact*; it would be *incapable* of further success. The indication of this state of affairs would be a chaotic lack of mutual agreement between experiments and the incapability of such revision of the theory as would bring it into line with the experiments. We said that it is possible that the path ends in a cul-de-sac at the point reached today. In fact this is much too feebly expressed. It is infinitely

more probable that the path ends than that it has a possible continuation. For it is astounding that there is a path at all and no valid reason can be given why the wonder should continue. Instead of saying that the path has a possible continuation we could also say that the datum is further knowable. We have therefore applied to physics the second of the limits of rational thinking: thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the presupposition that the datum is knowable. We now see that this must be interpreted in two different ways: thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the presupposition that the datum is knowable *at all*; and, thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the presupposition that the datum *will continue from now on* to be knowable. A duality of this kind between *at all* and *will continue from now on* also exists for the third and for the first limitations of rational thinking. Let us now turn to the latter.

The first limit was: thought can no longer give cogent reasons for the validity of its own instruments. These instruments were among other things the rules of logical association and the categories. Since the rules of association function in all scholarly disciplines, while we are here confining our attention to physics, we will only mention the lack of cogent reasons for the validity of the *categories*.

The constitutive category of physics is the category of mathematically expressible causality. We have seen what a category really is – a general, fundamental utterableness of the entity on the basis of the utterance of that entity. The category really belongs to the language of the Holy Spirit. This is the ontic category. The ontic category is *ipso facto* true but it is not an instrument of thought. The instrument of thought is the gnostic category. This is not a second category subsidiary to the corresponding ontic one; it is our conjecture of the ontic category to which it is to correspond. The gnostic category belongs to historically developed language and is only true in so far as it agrees with the ontic one. The gnostic category is therefore only valid if there is an ontic category with which it agrees and even then only to the extent to which it does actually agree.

No cogent reasons can be given for the validity of mathematically expressible causality. The corresponding ontic category is only known to us through the conjecture of the gnostic category. It is therefore only by way of this conjecture that we can decide whether the corresponding ontic category exists and how far the agreement extends.

When we think about the category of mathematical causality and

try to express it, the fact that no cogent reasons for its validity can be given becomes drastically clear. It *is* no doubt a category, i.e. an utterableness, for the utterableness can be realized; but we discover in the attempt at realization how incompletely successful this is. We do not know what mathematically expressible causality really is. We use the category as an instrument of thought without even knowing what it contains. We are working with an instrument which we do not know. Are there then no grounds for the validity of this instrument? Undoubtedly there are, but only secondary ones and chiefly the fact that one can work with it successfully. The measure of success is a secondary reason for the validity. This measure was also a secondary reason in the case of the second limitation of rational thinking (the knowableness of the datum). These two – indeed all three – of the limits we have named are then different aspects of the same thing: that truth is only approachable in faith.

With this we come to an end of our discussion of the secularization of the cosmic picture. Has secularization given way to desecularization? Can we speak of the desecularization of the cosmic picture?

In order to say that we should have to give too much weight to the concepts 'secularization' and 'cosmic picture'. Thus stressed, the expression 'cosmic picture' would concede too much both to the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* and to the historical relativism which sees pictures as altering with the times without ever asking what features of the pictures are true. We know more about the heavens than the ancient and mediaeval worlds; our view of the cosmos is truer.

Is this completer knowledge of astronomy and physics a secularization and are our observations about the limits of rational thinking desecularization? Our fuller knowledge is a secularization if, and in as far as, it makes it more difficult for us to believe that the world is God's creation; and our observations are a desecularization if, and in as far as, they diminish or remove these difficulties. The difficulties spring from fear – not so much fear of the unfathomable abyss of infinity as fear of physics itself; fear lest 'reading the book of nature' should succeed to the point of infinity, fear lest the discovery of causes should proceed endlessly, fear lest technical mastery should in the course of removing all dependence deprive life of meaning, fear lest the flood of rational thought sweep away faith. Our observations about the limits of rational thinking are, then, in so far a desecularization as they have shown that the discovery of causes cannot pro-

ceed without limit because rational thought has presuppositions for which basically no grounds can be given; and that rational thought cannot sweep away faith because it is in faith that rational thought itself is rooted.

## 8 · The Possibilities and Limits of Biology

This chapter is concerned with another application of what has been said about the limits of rational thought and thereby with another rectification of so-called secularization. Here as later, however, we shall repeatedly see that secularization takes such different forms that it is not enough to apply the three limits of rational thought systematically to each discipline because important other aspects will thereby escape attention.

In the previous chapter we discussed the limitations of physics. These could really be summed up in the fact that the possibility of physics was by no means self-evident; and there were grounds enough for pointing this out. For if the possibility of physics is held to be a matter of course, then the sphere of being is conceived of as being entirely absorbed by 'nature' which is the same as 'Reality'. All scholarly disciplines except physics and mathematics then turn into an 'as if' and the cry goes up for a *unified science*. This, however, is secularization of the worst kind.

In biology it is different. The possibility of biology is not in general held to be a matter of course, nor is the main tendency of modern thought to hypostatize the biological cadre into 'Reality'. We saw in chapter 3 that biologically speaking the state of affairs since the process of secularization is not entirely clear. The process of secularization – Darwinism – was originally the application of *mechanical* categories and a claim to explain the evolution of living forms in terms of physics. We have seen, however, that there was later a reaction against this and that specifically biological theory has triumphed. Yet even the biologists themselves are far from recognizing this. By far the greater number of them think that what is really scientific in biology is not biology at all but chemistry. In other words, most biologists think that biology is not a cadre on its own but belongs to

the cadre comprising physics, chemistry and astronomy. In the forefront of biology today is the attempt to explain the origin of life, heredity and the modification of species in terms of protein chemistry.

Consequently in the case of biology we must not only talk about its limits but also about its possibilities. Secularization is not only a trespassing beyond the proper limits of biological thought; it is also the denial of the possibility of biology. It thereby emerges that oddly enough most biologists deny the possibility of biology – not, of course, if they are working as biologists, in their work; but in their judgment of the nature of that work in as far as they pursue the philosophy of biology. They then say that biology is part of chemistry.

Biology is possible. That means that biology has a specific constitutive category of its own, different from the specific constitutive categories of other specialized sciences and going back to a specific methodological idea peculiar to itself and differing from the specific methodological ideas of other specialized sciences. We may call the peculiar, specific constitutive category of biology the organic category. What is of particular importance at the moment is the difference between it and the peculiar specific constitutive category of physics. The latter was the category of mathematically expressible causality. The organic category implies a biological causality which is different from that of physics.

The existence of a constitutive category is, as we have seen, not self-evident. The existence of the organic category is therefore not self-evident either. What does it mean when we say that the organic category 'exists'? It means that in created being (in cases where we are bound to recognize it as 'living') there is contained as ontic category an astonishing utterableness and that it is this towards which we are striving with our gnostic organic category. There is no decisive criterion by which we can assert that this is so – only secondary ones: an objective challenge to apply the organic category and the success of the application. This success is evident in biology, though it is not as spectacular as in physics.

The organic category is derived from a methodological idea and we must now try to formulate both category and idea. We know that we can only be partially successful since the ontic category is only approached by the gnostic one and does not yield itself up even with the surrender of the latter. But even the gnostic category, as conjecture of the ontic one, is not revealed directly; access to it is only through the process of its application.

Apart from this, the matter is much easier than in physics. The methodological idea of biology is quite simply to recognize and investigate living things in their space-time manifestation, each according to its particular kind.

Emphasis on the space-time manifestation is essential, for living things have other dimensions as well. The spiritual is part of human existence, and both men and animals have an inner life which can only questionably be assigned to the space-time dimension. As always with a methodological idea, concepts and limits are vague. The important thing, however, is that the methodological idea of biology is *not* the recognition and study of life in all its aspects. There would then be no possibility of a specific cadre. Nor can the methodological idea (with the somnambulistic character of which we have spoken) know in advance that such a specific possibility is available through the limitation to what we have vaguely called space-time manifestation.

The instigation to such a methodological idea doubtless lies in the organisms themselves. Biology is derived from observation – direct unprejudiced observation which recognizes the individuality of the observed object and is open to surprise and wonder. Goethe practised this kind of observation, which is inseparable from thought and the formation of concepts. Aristotle, however, takes precedence of Goethe, his ‘first philosophy’ being built up on the basis of the observation of organisms; it might be called a biologization of the world picture. But this, as we shall see, is also trespass, this time in the opposite direction, and as such it is a form of secularization; the biological categories denied today are here made absolute.

This methodological idea (to recognize and investigate living things in their space-time manifestation, each according to its particular kind) has in the course of biological development crystallized into the organic category. We know too that we cannot entirely penetrate the category for it is not given to us a second time via the detour of the gnostic category’s conjecture. Nor can we entirely penetrate the gnostic category since it does not exist as an established structure apart from its being as conjecture and is therefore only at our disposal *modo operandi*.

But although we know that the attempt is at bottom doomed to failure, we can still attempt to express the organic category as well as we can at present. The quality of being organic is specific to the organism. An organism is so called because it has organs. What is an



organ? The basic meaning of *organon* is tool; but when Plato speaks of *organa di' hōn aisthanetai hēmōn to aisthanomenon hekaston* (*Theaetetus* 158c), the word has only the meaning of tool in a figurative sense; in the real sense it means organ. This word has no synonym. An organ and a tool are alike in having a function, but the context in which, and the whole on behalf of which, this function is exerted are different. The hammer is a tool, the stomach is an organ. The hammer is used by man, is incorporated in a functional context determined by man and functions within a whole of which it is not really a part. The stomach on the other hand is not passively used by the organism but functions actively, belongs in a functional context whose operative initiative is not confined to this one organ (though not lying entirely outside it) and functions within a whole of which it is a genuine part. All this must be much more thoroughly worked out; but we have already seen enough to appreciate how subtle all this is, how finely shaded the distinctions and yet how great the difference between organism and thing; we see what precision is necessary and what care must be taken to avoid going astray in the choice of words.

We took the stomach as an example of an organ. If we include other organs in the discussion, for example the eye and the hand, we see how the relationship to consciousness varies. The operational initiative is largely unconscious in the case of the stomach, largely conscious in the case of the hand. Incidentally consciousness is not an essential feature of the organic category. Plants are also organisms.

It is in the organic category that the 'organism-ness' of an organism exists, though we cannot explain this by any completely adequate definition. We cannot exhaust the nature of the organic category in words, but we can draw from it in various respects. Thus if we consider the relation of the whole to its parts: in anything organic the whole is more than the sum of its parts, without this 'more' being localized in any particular part. That is of course true of every whole, not merely of an organic one, which leads us to ask how this special, organic whole is fused together compared with other unities. In anything organic the fusing principle lies in the specific *effect*, that is to say in organic causality. Where does this effect come from? What operates on what? Does the part operate on the whole or the whole on the part? Does the operational initiative lie with the whole or the part? We have already said that the operational initiative is neither confined to the organ nor entirely outside it. It is not the case, how-

ever, that parts and whole are present first of all and subsequently begin to operate on one another; in other words, substance does not precede causality. On the contrary, it is in organic causality that the very meaning of the distinction between part and whole in anything organic lies. The analysis of this organic causality is a second way in which we can draw from the organic category. Organic causality has the character of a special purposefulness, or teleology, but, let us note, it is a *special* teleology. Many biologists have protested against the view that biology works with teleological categories. This protest rests partly on the mistaken belief that there is only one kind of teleology, the teleology of human activity, which is directed towards the carrying out of a previously determined purpose. In part too the protest rests on another misunderstanding, namely that there is only one kind of causality – that of theoretical physics.

We must here break off our analysis of the organic category, but we have seen enough to be able to state that it is a special category, not derivable from any other. Consequently biology (whose constitutive category is the organic one) is a special science, not a part of physics. To put it in different terms: the cadres of biology and physics are different. To deny the difference between biology and physics is to trespass across the frontiers of the category and such a trespass is always a form of secularization – a secularization *in malam partem*; one which rests on false reasoning and is thus easily eliminated.

Having thus established that the cadres of biology and physics (i.e. chemico-astro-physics) are different and thus occupy different positions in the sphere of being, we must for a moment pause to consider the *relative* positions of the two cadres. An organism is material, consisting of matter in space and time; and it is physics and chemistry which are competent for matter in space and time. Nobody today would deny that normal physics and chemistry apply to living things. The thermic, electrical and mechanical processes which go on in an organism belong to the cadre of physics and the chemical processes belong to the cadre of chemistry, which, as we have seen, is identical with that of physics. For biology, therefore, physics and chemistry are auxiliary sciences. We have already said that today the chemical processes which occur in the inception of life and in heredity stand in the forefront of biological investigation. This is of course completely legitimate. It only becomes trespass if the possible origin of life and heredity are held to be entirely explicable (and hence practically

controllable) by the application of this chemical category – and with it of mathematico-physical causality.

In conclusion, a summing up and a coda: there are two kinds of secularization in biology, neither of them intrinsic to it. One kind is an underestimation, the other is an overestimation, and both trespass beyond the proper limits. The underestimation holds that biology is impossible and assigns the organism to the cadre of chemistry. Then the field is open. If one border-line is ignored, then reverence in the face of wonder disappears and all the border-lines go. If biology is part of chemistry and if biology is a complete study of life, then life, even the life referred to in John 1.4, belongs to the realm of physics. This means that we can explain it exhaustively and can potentially produce it in a test-tube.

Another kind of secularization, however, consists of an overestimation of biology. This is trespass in the opposite direction. The whole sphere of being is conceived of in biological categories and the phantom of 'Reality' raises its head once more. Reality is now universal life. Not only does nature belong to it – so does history, which is conceived of in biological categories, every civilization running its course through forms corresponding to youth, maturity and old age. This overestimation of biology comes about if the possibility of biology is held to be a matter of course and if its limits are misunderstood. We gave as the limits of rational thinking that no cogent reasons can be given for (1) the validity of one's own instruments of thought, (2) the knowableness of the datum, and (3) the direction which thought must take. If these limits are misunderstood:

1. the gnostic organic category will be deemed completely lucid and adequate;
2. the ontic category will be deemed synonymous with the gnostic;
3. the whole field of being will be deemed to be completely filled up by this ontic category of causality, so that this sphere *is*, homogeneously, the organic; biological thought is then no longer based on a choice of direction.

## 9 · The Truth of Psychology: Secondary Criterion

Physics (i.e. chemico-astro-physics), starting from presuppositions of which it is itself barely conscious, has found a path. It has entered into a fixed orbit, rather to our surprise; for it is not at all a matter of course that physics should prove to be possible in this way. In physics we are constantly realizing with astonishment that we are on the track of an objective structure. It is amazing to what degree this objective structure can be mathematically expressed and it is even more amazing that the structure was more or less anticipated in the methodological idea.

Where, then, does this orbit at which physics has arrived lie? Secularized thought says, within 'Reality'. We believe that it would be truer to say, within the sphere of being. It makes a considerable difference to the evaluation and practical application of physics whether one says 'Reality' or 'the sphere of being'. It is only for physics itself that it apparently, up to now, makes little difference; physics seems to go its own independent way.

Biology also, starting from presuppositions of which it is itself barely conscious, has found a path, a different one from physics, although physics is an auxiliary of biology. Here it is with less conviction that we say that it makes no difference to biology whether we speak of a course within the sphere of being or one within 'Reality', for the interpretation of life could be of importance for biology itself.

We now come to psychology, and there are two central points which must be made:

1. Psychology has up to now found no path; it has not arrived at any fixed course.
2. It makes a considerable difference to the possibility of psychology whether we place it within 'Reality' or within the sphere of being.

What is psychology really talking about?<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this seems rather an unfair question. We discovered that physics cannot say what it is talking about. Is it nature, as a clearly defined part of reality, outside which other definable spheres lie? One cannot quite say that. Is it a sharply defined basic category of causality? But we do not know the meaning of this statement, not knowing what causality is. Biology cannot say either what it is talking about, whether as regards its sphere of interest or as regards its basic category. Why then should we expect psychology to be able to do so? It is apparently perfectly possible, as witness physics and biology, for a science to be unable to answer this question and yet find its orbit.

In the case of psychology, however, the question has a particular relevance. Psychology has been telling us for years that it can say precisely what it is that it is talking about, namely the consciousness. Now this is a curious affair. Psychology is based on a special ontology. Generally the specialized sciences are held to be immune to philosophical incursions of this kind but, without our generally being aware of it, our whole thought, our language and our very existence in its attempt to find its bearings are shot through with divisions of being – divisions which may be false but which we can only with the greatest difficulty bring face to face with the truth. Alterations in ontology therefore come about very slowly; one must reckon in terms of centuries.

The ontology on whose basis psychology has long thought itself capable of expressing precisely the object of its deliberations was the distinction between *matter* and *consciousness*.

Matter		Consciousness	
inorganic-physical	living	soul	spirit

Matter itself is divided by an imprecise line corresponding to the distinction between physics and biology of which we have spoken. Consciousness also contains a line, similarly imprecise, between 'soul' and 'spirit'. The heavy line between matter and consciousness is in contrast all the more marked.

Psychology of course spoke of the consciousness, particularly of the human consciousness; and the matter from which this human

<sup>1</sup> The following section is taken from my book *Het vooronderstelde* (The Hague, 1963).

consciousness is divided is called in this special context body (again with the shifting and imprecise senses of 'causal' and 'living' in their normal senses).

In what way is this consciousness open to research? Here there are peculiar difficulties in the way, for I cannot observe another person's consciousness; it is only my own that is at my disposal. Observation is thus limited to self-observation, or introspection. One can also investigate the consciousness of another person indirectly, by relying on what he himself says about it. In this case, one has the additional advantage that one can cause the person on whom the experiment is being made to react to particular stimuli; in this way psychological experiment becomes possible. It is even better applied to a stranger than to oneself: the advantage of introspection in an experiment applied to oneself does not outweigh the disadvantage that the functioning of the consciousness is disturbed by preoccupation with the active carrying out of the experiment.

The consciousness is certainly an uncomfortable element – shifting, fluid – if one were to search for a material comparison it would have to be of a moving current. How can such a current be investigated? It can only be done by observation of the individual droplets of the fluid (which preserve a constant identity) and through them of the law of the current. Similarly, with the stream of consciousness an attempt must be made to distinguish the constant elements and to pursue them in their shifting environment. What is the nature of these elements? Are they the simple components of sensation? Is consciousness homogeneous, consisting throughout of modifications of sense impressions? Or of mental images? Or is it rather that, just as matter was long thought to consist of the four elements of earth, air, fire and water, which were not derived from one another, so consciousness consists of the three elements of imagination, sensation and volition, which are also not derivable from one another?

Do we perceive our fellow men, our neighbour, in this consciousness? The answer is no, for consciousness is a kind of substance with its own laws, only to be traced by observation and experiment; it is completely strange, non-human and impersonal.

But is it necessary for us to perceive our neighbour in the object of psychology? If we expect this, are we not confusing psychology with anthropology? We are not asking much if we expect to recognize human beings in anthropology, the study of human beings; but psychology is only supposed to have something to say about the



consciousness. And the complete person is after all made up of body and consciousness or, we might say, of body and soul; when we thus consider the consciousness in its individuality we generally call it soul.

Is this true? If we do not perceive man in the soul, and then evidently not in the body either, can we perceive our neighbour in the combination of the two? He would here be just as invisible, even if the deficiency in our perception were compensated by a mysterious, mystical unity of body and soul. The mystery of the unity cannot increase the value of the parts in cognition.

This is all true; but the psychology which we have here outlined belongs to the nineteenth century, not to the present day. The progress of psychology since then has been marked by a growing dissatisfaction with precisely this notion of consciousness as a kind of stream examinable by scientific methods. Now it would be unjustifiable to devote so much attention to the outline of an earlier stage of psychology if this stage had really been left behind. But is this the case?

Many tendencies have contributed to the attempts of psychology to free itself from the ontological matter-consciousness pattern. In most cases these tendencies have been derived from philosophy.

Psychology discovered the dimension of depth; the stream of consciousness now became a sea of which the consciousness was now only the surface layer, the subconscious forming the real volume. In these depths the ontological frontier with matter melts away and so does individuality; and the sea takes on once more the character which it has in the oldest human records: it is the dangerous, untamed, chaotic element. It is only through recognition of this that the possibility of healing lies. The interpretation of dream symbols allows us to dispense with the neurotic attempt to dam up the natural forces of the currents of the subconscious. Do we recognize our neighbour? Or is it unreasonable to demand this of psychology?

A second tendency is in direct opposition to the first. In place of an investigation of the darkness of the subconscious we have a conviction of the illuminable nature of consciousness (in principle, at any rate) – Edmund Husserl's philosophical phenomenology. Philosophical? Certainly, but it is a philosophical perception of consciousness, indeed of the absolute, pure consciousness. And if psychology is the study of consciousness then this philosophy must also, it would seem, be psychology. It is only recently that Husserl's lectures on phenomenological psychology have been published. The new, highly



important thing that Husserl (following Franz Brentano) discerned and formulated is this: consciousness is intentional. It is always consciousness of something. It is orientated towards what is outside itself. Intentionality is the basic structure of consciousness. This is not so of the world of material things. Consequently matter and consciousness do not form two areas of being side by side, separated by a common border-line; they are two *layers* of being which are structurally so different that they have no common dimension and no common border-line at all. This has far-reaching consequences for psychology. The psychology of consciousness as a kind of substance consisting of separate particles of sensation or mental images has to give way to the psychology of consciousness as *function* – the function of being orientated towards. . . . Do we here perhaps catch sight of our neighbour, of man? Is man also to be comprehended by his being orientated towards . . . ? Or should the emphasis be the other way round? Should the being orientated towards . . . be understood from the point of view of the other towards which the person is orientated? But who is this other? Another person? In this case we should be trying to understand men through other men and would be going round in a circle. Incidentally, is the other person the same as our neighbour?

A third trend is already implicit in this question. It is a tendency which is specifically directed against the ontological division between matter and consciousness or, what basically comes to the same thing, between body and soul. Is it not the nature of man to stand in relation to another? Is not the characteristic of being a person essentially something to do with the I-Thou relationship? And is it not the case that as long as psychology concerns itself with the soul and therefore thinks in terms of the body-soul pattern, the I-Thou relationship fails to exist for it and is thus incomprehensible? We may mention the names of two men from whom this question derives, Friedrich Gogarten and Martin Buber. Neither of them is a psychologist, however, and they have not worked out what they have discerned in psychological terms. But we may ask whether it is in fact possible to work out this insight in psychological terms at all. Does not the word 'psychology' mean 'teaching about the soul'? Are we not bound to view psychology as an error and to replace it by anthropology, teaching about man? However, one can say, what's in a name? Psychology does attempt to find out what goes on 'inside' man. After the bankruptcy of psychology the old business will still be

carried on under a new name; psychology has really always wanted to be anthropology.

We may therefore turn to the fourth trend, which is again associated with a particular name, this time William Stern. Stern's anthropological psychology centres on the person; it is intended to be 'personalistic'. If we ask what a person is, we are told that a person is to be comprehended in contrast with its opposite, the thing. A thing is the sum of its parts. A person is not the sum of his parts but 'an existence of such a sort that in spite of the multiplicity of the parts a real unity, unique in kind and value, is formed, and as such achieves, in spite of the multiplicity of the part-functions, a unified, purposeful activity of its own'.<sup>1</sup> The essential points are unity of being and purposeful activity of its own. And psychology is 'the science of the person as he experiences and is capable of experiencing'<sup>2</sup> – i.e. this is again a psychology of experience. That is 'general psychology on a personalistic basis'.

With the fifth trend we come to Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Binswanger. The traditional view of the human soul as a self-contained consciousness whose being consists in the perceptive experience of its own self is cast on one side. Man is not an already present thing; he is, in Heidegger's phrase, *Dasein* (literally 'being there', or existence) as a concerned being-in-the-world. As such he is being-with-the-other. This is *the* primal, first thing; science cannot therefore find out what lies 'behind' it, and here psychology must take its starting-point.

In the sixth trend, with Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this being-with kind of being-in-the-world is corporeal being-in-the-world. The body is not a thing which is just in the world, which is itself another large object; the quality of being corporeal is precisely and concretely that being-orientated-towards- of which we have already spoken. From this point the psychology of perception is rewritten – under the title of phenomenology.

The seventh trend urges that psychology should cling to experience. We do not experience the psychic for we cannot see or feel it. The psychic cannot therefore be the object of psychology. Psychology should keep to what it can experience – behaviour; hence the name given to this trend, behaviourism.

Now physics shows that new impulses in a science do not in them-

<sup>1</sup> W. Stern, *Person und Sache* I, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> W. Stern, *Allgemeine Psychologie auf personalistischer Grundlage*, p. 99.

selves mean lack of direction. The theory of relativity and the quantum theory were radical innovations, but in both cases previous theories were absorbed into the new ones so that the constancy of direction was confirmed. In psychology, however, the tendencies we have mentioned act in different directions. The fact that they arise both successively and simultaneously means that psychology has found no constant direction. And this in turn means that even the secondary criterion for its truth gives a negative result. As we have seen, this secondary criterion for the truth of a specialized science consists in the 'success' of its formulation of concepts. The lack of direction of psychology does not speak well for the amount of truth it contains.

## 10 · The Truth of Psychology: Primary Criterion

The decisive criterion of the truth of a *specialized* science is to measure it against the ontic utterance. Since this utterance is not given to us, however, this criterion is not at our disposal. We only have a secondary criterion for the truth of a *specialized* science, and that is the 'success' of its formulation of concepts. This success consists in the crystallization and consolidation of the original methodological idea in unexpected new findings, so that in the formulation of concepts new perspectives open up, the horizon continues to widen out and the path of science proves anew at every point to lead further in the same direction (although the constancy of the direction can only be subsequently established).

We ended the previous chapter with the assertion that psychology does not stand up well to the application of this secondary criterion. Before we go further and come to a far more radical conclusion, we must be clear about the fact that our modern society is unthinkable without psychology – as unthinkable as it would be without technology. The practising psychologist applies experimental psychological methods and profits by his knowledge of the clinical picture. Psychiatry and psycho-technology are applied psychology, and there are many other practical and theoretical applications – the psychology of mental development, psychology of age patterns, sexual psychology, mass psychology, educational and social psychology, etc.

Let us now return to the real, decisive, primary criterion of the truth of a *specialized* science. It would consist in the specialized science being measured against the ontic utterance. That is impossible because the ontic utterance is not given to us directly as a particular kind of datum outside the specialized science itself. What, however, if psychology were impossible as a specialized science? Have we not repeatedly named a primary criterion for the truth of psychology, by

saying that we do not recognize our neighbour in the concepts formulated by psychology? Psychology as it is today does, it is true, offer fractions of insight which make possible the practical applications we have mentioned; but as soon as it arrives at the essentials, we no longer recognize man, our neighbour, in its picture of human experience.

Why is this? In his *Church Dogmatics* (III/2) Karl Barth argues that Jesus Christ is the true man; in Christ it becomes manifest that man is man because he can hear and answer to the voice of God. And in Christ it also becomes manifest that God is a concrete God, so concrete that the whole Bible cannot exhaust his concreteness. Now our intention is not to sully psychology with dogma but to be objective – to recognize an objectivity which we fail to find in psychology.

But, it might be replied, this might at most apply to anthropology, but psychology is not anthropology. Psychology is concerned only with human (and animal) experience, not with the man or the animal as a whole. To this objection we must answer that the relation of psychology to anthropology is not the same as the relation of physics to biology. We do not need to find biology's 'life' in physics' 'nature', but we surely ought to find anthropology's 'man' in psychology's 'experience'.

The real point is this: man's essential concern is with God, i.e. man's nature – more, his very being – is this having-to-be-concerned-with-God. Man does not therefore possess a being which rests in itself or in the world or in reality, is as such expressible, and subsequently arrives at a relation to God. On the contrary, the relation to God is constitutive for man. It is hardly necessary to add that though the relation is constitutive for man it is not so for God. The relation of God to man therefore precedes the relative 'man' and constitutes that relative. Even more unusually, this relation is not a generalization, it is history – creation, reconciliation, redemption.

All this demands biblical argument. Biblical argument is *also* exegetical argument – one might perhaps say that it *is* exegetical argument provided that the exegesis proceeds from the unity of the text. Exegetical argument should not therefore confine itself to the portion of the text on the creation but should also, against the background of the whole Bible, take in the section in which the subject is reconciliation and redemption.

We must now leave the argument from biblical exegesis on one side, just touching in passing on II Cor. 5.17-26: 'Therefore, if any



one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is of God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself. . . .’ Is it not implicit here that even in the ‘old’ that has passed away, the being of man was constituted by his relation to God? Is the foolishness of sin not simply the fact that man wants something which is outside the possibilities of his being – to take up a neutral attitude to God? Being in Christ is a new creation which confirms, restores and surpasses the first (not the ‘old’). Is it not here implicit that even the first creation is *not* the fabrication by God of a man who is in his nature independent of God? The idea that the creation of man has only to do with his origin in a remote past and not with his being in the present could by stretching a point be read into the first story of the creation (Gen. 1). But one would then have to abandon the golden rule of exegesis, that it should be based on the text as a whole. In this case the golden rule demands that interpretation of the creation proceed from the central point of God’s saving activity. In the light of this, there is only one possible paraphrase of biblical anthropology: the being-addressed-by-God and the having-to-answer-to-his-Word is not only part of man’s being, it is constitutive of it. Obviously this reduces biblical anthropology to the barest formula, a formula which is only to be expanded through listening to the biblical witness to the nature and content of God’s Word (or speech). The individualism which equates the being of man with the being of the individual and the universalism which equates it with the being of the community are both equally remote from biblical anthropology.

We cannot develop this further at present. The cardinal point is this: God is constitutive for man. The concept of man includes the complete saving activity of God towards him, including his being a creature and coming to be created. It is therefore impossible truly to express the nature of man without taking into account God’s relation to him, for to ignore this is to ignore man’s nature and being. This applies to anthropology and, in as far as anthropology is presupposed by psychology, it applies to psychology too.

If then it is not in the nature of man to be free of God then he is not free of him ‘in reality’ either. Here we have arrived at the second essential point that we wanted to make about psychology,<sup>1</sup> namely that it makes a considerable difference to the possibility of psychology whether we localize it within ‘Reality’ or within the sphere of being.

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. 9.



In fact, as we have seen, 'Reality' does not exist. In as far as it acts as a scientific presupposition it is a false presupposition and in as far as it is a leaven in the modern attitude to life it is a false secularization. 'Reality' is the impossible result of an impossible divorce between a transcendent Godhead on the one hand and on the other, immanent and self-contained, everything that is experienceable and thinkable. Obviously we must experience everything we know in some fashion or other. We experience God also. But the concept of 'Reality' rests on the postulate that 'experience' can be illuminated by autonomous, rational thinking and that the rationality of this thinking has no limits. As we have seen, this postulate is untrue.

If psychology is possible, therefore, it must be localized, together with anthropology, in the sphere of being. This is nothing out of the way, in as far as it applies to every specialized science, indeed to every thing that is conceivable. Physics too, for example, must be localized in the sphere of being if the word 'creation' is not to be emptied of meaning. Yet the implications for physics are quite different from the implications for psychology. It makes a considerable difference to the existential presuppositions of physics and the ethics of its application whether we place it in the sphere of being or in (fictitious) 'Reality'. But for the ordinary day to day work of physics it makes, as far as we can see, hardly any difference at all at the moment; for the formation of concepts in physics is scarcely dependent on this localization. It also makes a considerable difference to the existential presuppositions of psychology and the ethics of its application whether we place it in the sphere of being or in (fictitious) 'Reality', just as it does with physics. But the great difference is that it is also very important indeed for psychology itself; for the formation of psychological concepts is highly dependent on this localization. The sphere of being, namely, is dominated by its centre – God. The cadre of physics holds such a position in the sphere that it is not directly orientated towards this centre; whereas if psychology is possible at all as cadre, i.e. as specialized science, then like anthropology it is – it must be – directly orientated towards it. That applies to psychology not as it is but as it would have to be if it were to be true.

This has far-reaching consequences, not only for the content but also for the type of psychological concepts formed. For the centre of the sphere of being, towards which psychology (together with anthropology) is orientated is the one, concrete God, Father of Jesus Christ.

Two questions now present themselves. The first is, is this true

psychology possible as a *specialized* science? A specialized science means a *limited* cadre within the sphere of being, and that implies, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> 'the crystallization and consolidation of the original methodological idea in unexpected new findings, so that in the formulation of concepts new perspectives open up, the horizon continues to widen out and the path of science proves anew at every point to lead further in the same direction'. On the basis of the pre-suppositions that have been developed, is psychology a possible specialized science of this kind? We must leave the answer to this question open. It is for the professional psychologists to find an answer and we cannot in principle anticipate the result.

The second question is, how are we to judge the present psychology? Having rejected the tempting but flippant 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush', we must make a distinction.

First we must really *see* the problems here. Usually they are not seen. The reasoning runs more or less as follows: the psychical is real, for every psychical occurrence lasts for a certain time, beginning at a certain point and ending at a certain point; and anything that fills up a period of time is real. What is real can be investigated and there can be a scholarly discipline connected with it. The psychical is not the whole of reality; consequently the science of the psychical is a specialized science.

The fallacies in this argument converge on the use of the word 'reality'. We have seen that 'something is real' can only mean that it can be ordered into a particular cadre. If we say the psychical is real we are saying that we have a valid cadre at our disposal into which it fits. The fallacy is that we do not in fact have such a cadre. We saw in the previous chapter that a cadre of psychology as science has failed to crystallize up to now. And the cadre of everyday life has no special division for psychology.

Psychology as it actually exists has not therefore up to now consolidated itself as a unified cadre. It exists only as a collection of attempts at one. Every attempt begins with the application of a methodological idea. We may think of the various 'trends' which we noticed in psychology. Attempts are made with these to work out a methodological idea. This is not a complete failure. At the beginning there is a certain degree of success, but it soon becomes apparent that the decisive break-through is lacking. No highway emerges, stretching forward, as it proves, with steady constancy; instead, all paths lose

<sup>1</sup> See p. 65.

themselves in quicksands. These preliminary attempts, silted up in the course of their realization, had their context in a postulate of unity which is more bare intuition than concept.

What about the truth of this psychology? It has not yet succeeded in becoming a specialized science; thus the primary criterion of truth is lacking (in as far as it wishes to be judged as a specialized science), while the secondary criterion brings an unfavourable result. We can, however, also inquire into the truth of each separate attempt and have thereby a third criterion at our disposal, albeit an extremely uncertain one: namely a certain unsubstantiated plausibility in the formulation of psychological concepts and its success in practice. It would be a wearisome undertaking to evaluate the truth of the various attempts on this basis. The result would undoubtedly be that the less a psychological theory proceeds from the hypothesis of 'Reality' the more useful it is. For when psychology sets out from the presupposition of 'Reality' and in consequence thinks itself bound to localize human 'experience' in this reality, it has from the very beginning misconstrued the nature of man. This is bound to show in its usefulness, for the pragmatic is based on truth. But the usefulness of every psychological theory cannot be tested, for instance the psychology of religion. This is by nature pure theory and not suited to application. How can its truth then be judged? The only one of the criteria we have named which remains is a certain unsubstantiated plausibility in the formulation of concepts.

Beyond that there is only the transcendent criterion, which means not recognizing the claim of psychology to be a specialized science – i.e. the primary criterion which we have mentioned. This cannot then confine itself to the testing of the concepts formulated (in this case in religious psychology); it must concern itself with the evaluation of the presuppositions which are at the root of the concepts. This has two drawbacks. In the first place, the presuppositions of a theory are implicit, so that their unearthing really comes down to a transcendent interpretation. In the second place, the transcendent criticism itself proceeds from presuppositions, so that one presupposition is set up against another without the possibility of rational refutation. In our case the presupposition is the one for which we have coined the hieroglyph of the sphere of being.

## 11 · 'The Religious Projection'

The name of this chapter is the translated title of F. Sierksma's book, *De religieuze projectie*.<sup>1</sup>

If we discuss secularization in psychology today we cannot avoid dealing with this book. We will attempt to give an outline of its contents and since we do not share its presuppositions we can only do this by means of (translated) quotations.

The book is subtitled 'An anthropological and psychological study of projection phenomena in religion'. This subtitle suggests two comments. First, Sierksma intends an anthropological study. It emerges later that the psychology is based on the anthropology but that the transition is fluid. Second, the subject is projection phenomena *in* religion. Sierksma is clearly cautious – more so than S. Vestdijk in his book *De toekomst der religie (The Future of Religion)*<sup>2</sup> of which Sierksma says, 'It was above all his stress on the projective character of religion which threw the match into the Dutch powder barrel.' He is more cautious too than Sigmund Freud, of whom Sierksma says that 'in his later work he attempted to explain on a scientific basis, i.e. analytically and systematically, many religious phenomena, from the totem to God the Father'.

What then is 'projection' in the psychological sense? We quote: 'Freud, who introduced the concept of projection as a psychological term, did not always mean the same thing by it at different stages in his development. He meant (to give an example) that someone who is jealous and is always suspecting his wife of unfaithfulness is in fact attributing to his partner his own unconscious urge towards unfaithfulness; but he (i.e. Freud) also meant the religious notions which man projects as images somewhere within or beyond the world, as a child projects his illusions. Other people have called still other phenomena projections.'<sup>3</sup> 'Probably the expression "projection" has

<sup>1</sup> Delft, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Arnhem, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Sierksma, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

itself made insight into the common background of projection phenomena difficult if not impossible. It is highly probable that semi-conscious associations with technical projectors have blocked the formulation of the concept. Because of this association, the idea has silently persisted that in projection an image or an impression will always be externalized through the pencil of light of the consciousness and thrown upon the "screen" of the world. . . . These unconscious associations contain an element of truth – the recognition that projection is a problem of perception. What is wrong is the notion, taken over from technology, that only perception content is in question, fragments of man or fragments of the world which are separately "re-projected" upon the world, thus giving it a subjective colouring or form. . . . But it remains a fact that man does throw images and conscious and unconscious impressions upon the world. There is therefore no reason why one should not continue to call this projection, as long as it is remembered that only man disposes of reflective consciousness and that the projection of this in images can only be a typically human complication of the general problem of perception. It is known that in perception we make the world different from what it is in reality. What the world looks like in reality is hard to decide and it is psychologically speaking not important. The point of psychological importance is that man knows about a world-in-itself, i.e. knows his own limitations. In sense perception the world becomes for man his own world. The fact that this sense perception is much more complicated in man than in the animal does not alter the fact that it is with a problem of perception that we are ultimately dealing. The relation between man and his world only exists by virtue of the somatic-psychical-noetic organization of the sense organs, just as the relation between the animal and the world is only possible by means of the sense organs. In order to arrive at a correct definition of the typical aspects of human projection, therefore, it is necessary to find out how the "projection", i.e. the subjective modification of the objective world, works on the non-human level.<sup>1</sup>

By 'projection' Sierksma therefore understands the subjective modification of the objective world, which already takes place in sense perception because, owing to the organization of the sensory organs, sense perception makes the world different from what it is in reality. This also applies to the animal. *Religious* projection is thus a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

special mode of general projection, a mode that only occurs in man.

Sierksma now traces, as he promised, first how projection works on the non-human level. 'Every species of animals has its own "world of signs", to use Uexküll's expression. This means that every species has its own world of perception, i.e. its own subjective world, which is a fragment of the world-without-qualification and differs from the world of all other animals, including man. The fragmentary character of this "world of signs" is the result of the animal's sensory equipment. . . . It is true of all animals, as also of man, that the part of the world to which they are not sensorily "tuned in" simply does not exist for them. By means of perception therefore every animal turns the world into his own world.

'It would be wrong, however, to isolate perception here. In the expression sensorily "tuned in" it is already implicit that perception is at the service of action, is the expression of the animal's form of life, and that it brings about the connection between animal and world with a view to the actions which are necessary in the struggle for life. . . . Perception and action correspond exactly in the animal and both are necessarily selective, serving the preservation of the species. . . . The animal therefore only perceives the things in the world to which his instinctive sensory organization is "tuned". Things or objects thus do not exist for animal perception. There are only signals or stimuli to which the animal gives an instinctive "answer". . . . The relation between the animal and his world is consequently extremely direct, so direct that one can easily arrive at the point of speaking of the animal-world relation as one of unbroken unity. . . .

'Summing up, it can be said that the world of every animal species is determined in the first place by the number, kind and "capacity" of its sensory organs. This world is constituted in the second place, in the case of the lower animals, through the instinctive certainty of their perceptions; among the higher animals, through the conative certainty of their perceptions. . . .

'Now that it has been made clear that the world is determined for the lower animal by his instinctive soul, via his perception, and for the higher animal by his animal soul, we must now trace how the world of man is additionally determined by the human psyche.'<sup>1</sup>

Sierksma now comes to projection on the human level. In this connection he first discusses the structure of the human psyche. 'The

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.



relevant distinction in the consciousness is qualitatively determined by the fact that man possesses self-consciousness. Not only can he place himself at one remove from the world, he can detach himself from himself. . . . The plant is open to the world on all sides. The animal has a closely-contained form of life. . . . This means that the animal can be called the subject in as far as it stands in a relationship to its world and to itself. That is animal consciousness; but the animal itself is not even conscious of this relationship. On the contrary, animal life is absorbed by the here and now. . . . In other words the animal has consciousness but not self-consciousness. The animal stands consciously inside himself, man self-consciously outside himself. The animal lives concentrically, man eccentrically. That is the ultimate, underivable basis of our human existence, that I can be conscious of myself, can stand outside myself and confront myself, am capable of evaluating myself, judging myself, condemning, idealizing, torturing myself, and so on and so forth. . . . The animal is the subjective centre of his world and acts and reacts consciously from this centre; but without being conscious of the centre itself. Man lives similarly, but in addition he has knowledge of his centre. He at once lives from and experiences this centre, which is thus simultaneously subject and object. It can only be subject and object by virtue of that other absolute and underivable subject which is the eccentric centre through which man has world- and self-consciousness and can detach himself from the world and himself. . . . By virtue of its eccentric position, consciousness as we find it in the animal has now experienced an alteration in quality; it has become self-consciousness and world-consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the human psyche is therefore determined by the eccentric form of human life. This eccentric form means that the real centre from which man takes up his position lies outside the immediate life centre from which he consciously acts on and reacts to the world. The eccentric centre is absolute and underivable subject; this can turn the life centre in the immediate subject into the object.

This eccentric structure of the human psyche is now also determining for human projection. 'It has already been shown how by means of the eccentric consciousness the unity of subject and object is split, so that man objectifies not only the world but also himself. He thus finds himself between the reality of the world and the "reality of the soul" and is forced to keep his balance towards both sides, as if on

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.



a see-saw. . . .<sup>1</sup> If, however, his balance is upset on one side or the other so that man sees his inner or outer world approaching dangerously near, then the only choice open to him is either to replace the lost objectivity by subjectivity, thus restoring the balance as well as he can, or to fall into the nothingness of sleep or unconsciousness; he must therefore supplement what he cannot master through objectification.<sup>2</sup> . . . Without the defence mechanism of projection man would be mown down by the forces of the outer world. Even the unconsciousness of collapse has this functional significance. It is the final expedient, the most extreme attempt to *reculer pour mieux sauter*. One may compare the tendency of many people to become sleepy when they find themselves in a situation of conflict. They seize a moment's holiday from the ego in order to be able to look steadily at reality again afterwards. In the case of the prophet's or shaman's unconsciousness, on the other hand, simply a short withdrawal is not enough. These retreat entirely into an inner world and their image-projections in the vision are the products of a feverish activity which has no other purpose than the restoration of the balance between man and his inner world. Once the balance has been restored in this projection it is only through the balance achieved in this moment that the relationship to the outer world can be regulated: the form of life and the outer world in which it is lived are correlatives. This means that the outside world is stabilized in the same way as the inner one; the Christ whom Paul saw in the vision that was decisive for his life becomes in his world-image an all-powerful, even a cosmic principle. It is important from the aspect of religious psychology to stress this phenomenon sufficiently in view of the outsider's observation that in the history of religion so many people faint.<sup>3</sup> . . . It is obvious that in most cases it is impossible to distinguish sharply between a projection which is the result of a destruction of the balance between man and the outside world and a projection which originates in a disturbed relation between man and his inner world. A threat from the outside world increases the threat from the inner world and, *vice versa*, the destruction of balance on one front means that the balance on the other front is upset too. The correlation between the two worlds of man which we have described is and remains of basic importance. None the less the division must be kept in mind at least as a *sub-division* in the psychology of religion because there are unquestionably religious projection phenomena which have primarily

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

the function of defence against danger from outside, as in many primitive religions; while in spiritual pietism, mysticism and religiosity, where for example feelings of guilt are dominant, the projection arises as a defence against the insufficiency of man when confronted with his inner world. In both cases, however, it is the subjectivity of the inner world which compensates for a deficiency in objectifying detachment. In both cases projection is the result of human limitation and insufficiency.<sup>1</sup>

We started with the projection which is present in *every* perception and now find ourselves in a discussion of *religious* projection. What does the latter add to the former? 'It must be taken into account that in the destruction of human balance subjective factors can be added to the objective ones which are present in all perception.'<sup>2</sup> But the subjective factors added are not always of a religious kind. 'This consciousness that there is something which plays hide and seek with man behind things or within them, behind, within or beyond the world, which occasionally reveals itself only to slip away again immediately, is an integral feature of man and his world. This is an inevitable consequence of what was said from the point of view of anthropology and perception psychology about the correlation of form and domain of life in man. In the eccentric structure man has become his own mysterious background and the world has taken on for him its own background parallel to this. It is at the point of this hidden "something" behind things, the world and man that religious experience takes fire.'<sup>3</sup>

'The people who, in criticizing what they hold to be a psychologization, always place the objective character of religion in the foreground usually have secret apologetic intentions. They do not want a psychological discussion; they want to safeguard the so-called question of the truth. As good denizens of the western world, they start so unconsciously – and thus so dogmatically – from the outside world that they think that they have saved religion when they have placed the religious object in that outside world, so that religion "does not evaporate in psychological processes", as they put it. It is obvious to the psychologist, however, who proceeds from the relationship of the living being to his world, that an object is the purpose in religious experience. But it is just as obvious that man, who in his eccentricity knows both an inner and an outer world, can have a religious experience in either. It is in both worlds that he can become

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

conscious of his own insufficiency in the face of the hidden aspect, the ubiquitous secret.

'The mere fact that one speaks of experience implies that something is really experienced. If one wishes to stress this fact particularly, the stress must apply to all religious experience, calvinistic and mystical, primitive and western alike. But the so-called objective character of religious experience is based on the hidden aspect of man and his world which causes a man to become conscious of his own inadequacy. . . . Anthropologically and psychologically speaking, it is impossible to go further than the observation that in religious experience man becomes so conscious of the unknown aspect of his world that he loses his normal feeling of security and has to restore the disturbed balance of his existence. . . . Man subjectifies the unknown (which he cannot through objectification bring under control and which threatens to destroy his balance), turning it into a part of his world so that he rediscovers his balance in a stable world of perception in which he can find his sense of direction and can act, even with respect to the marginal religious phenomenon. The unknown has been turned into the known, both spheres are absorbed through the religious projection into an animate association. . . . We can speak of religion in all cases where man experiences, and experiences permanently, this objectified aspect of his world as unusual, while for the individual and/or the community it is viewed as of vital importance.'<sup>1</sup>

The book ends with a discussion of Buddhism, which Sierksma makes the touchstone of his view of religious projection. 'Buddhism is . . . of significance for the psychological treatment of projection in this study because this religion is the living example of the thesis we have set up, that the projection problem must be regarded as a question of perception on the basis of the eccentric structure which makes it possible for man both to objectify and to subjectify his world. Buddhism – at least some of its consistent forms – does not only revoke religious and other projections (i.e. the projections which are secretly viewed as the real psychical ones); it revokes the whole of human perception as projection. It denies no gods; it only views them as an accumulation of atoms, just as it views a table or a flower . . . as a more or less chance collection of meaningless particles. It does this in a completely scientific way – objective, analytic and consistent. . . . Nowhere is human eccentricity taken so seriously as in Buddhism. It is there shown that a man can detach himself com-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 170.

pletely from the inner and outer world, can objectify absolutely and can bring the eccentric distance to the maximum point. . . . The consistent Buddhist does not project his eccentric centre as his self, he uses it; he realizes the eccentric structure; he objectifies his inner and outer world without subjectifying, i.e. without projecting. . . . The point at issue is therefore the absolute reality, i.e. the reality from which man has completely detached himself in an attitude of complete objectification. . . . The Buddha took this seriously. . . . The central point is that as a psychologist he objectified and analysed man as a psycho-physical unit and came to the conclusion that the ego is not a reality but an illusion. This means that by virtue of the eccentric structure he views everything about man, everything that is conferred on man through his self-consciousness, as a chance conglomeration of neutral particles of reality. Everything – that is, everything with the exception of that mysterious eccentric centre from which man can objectify everything, with the exception of the eccentric centre itself.<sup>1</sup> ‘The whole of perception is thus exposed as projection. Nothing else is possible. If in extreme eccentric objectivity the inner and outer worlds are viewed as chance conglomerations, then perception, which is the fusion of the two conglomerations, is wiped out as well.’<sup>2</sup>

‘The only thing needed is insight and this insight is the same in kind as that which modern science has developed. Conze repeats what many people have said before, that Buddhism is scientific in its thinking. It searches cold-bloodedly for the truth behind appearances and finds it in the “definitive things” which have a similar function to the atoms and cells of western science. . . . Modern science is also conquering the world by objectifying and analysing it, searching cold-bloodedly behind appearances for essence and law, free from the subjective fears and desires of the inquirer.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 221.

## 12 · Critique

What attitude are we to take to Sierksma's book *De religieuze projectie*?

We want to speak plainly, and in order to do so we must be terse. The book proceeds from the presupposition of 'Reality' plus the eccentric centre which observes reality. This reality is a conglomeration of atoms. The implication of this presupposition is that the whole world of religion can be no more than a 'subjective modification of the objective world', that is to say projection. The touchstone is Buddhism, which withdraws the projection and really does end up with a conglomeration of atoms.

The book takes its stand on the set-piece of absolute reality; in the course of the book we are offered first the fireworks of subjectivity and then, at the end, the other set-piece of deprojection to the absolute reality.

The presupposition of 'Reality' as a conglomeration of atoms thus implies that not only religion but the whole of human life is an extraneous addition, that is a projection. The whole of human life is projection, with the single exception of the diagnosis that absolute reality is a conglomeration of atoms. It is impossible to extract from a presupposition something that is not included in it. Our criticism of religious psychology in general (in chapter 10) applies in a particular degree to this book too. For within the presupposition of 'Reality', many gradations of sensory riches are possible. Here, however, reality is conceived of as being completely empty of meaning. It is the conglomeration of Democritus' atoms and those of a certain nineteenth-century natural philosophy. It is a reality almost bare of categories.

This criticism applies to Sierksma's book to such a degree that in *this* case we do not even have to call it transcendent, presupposition being set against presupposition without the possibility of rational

confutation. The book is immanently illogical. It attempts to extract from its presuppositions what is simply not in them. One cannot extract a subjective world from a conglomeration of atoms because no subjective world is contained in this reality. True, it is not only the conglomeration of atoms which is presupposed, but also the eccentric centre that objectifies the conglomeration. But the function of this eccentric centre is then also exclusively objectification; in itself it is subjective without content – without content and hence also it without a subjective world.

We have here, therefore, a thought complex built up on a foundation too weak to bear it. It is a curious fact that this logical error is frequently to be met with in precisely those systems of thought which set out to exalt the claims of the scientific method. We shall find the same thing in philosophical secularization, particularly in neopositivism.

In order to be plain we were terse. Have we oversimplified? Have we been cheap? Is it not the case that Sierksma's presuppositions are implicit, so that the unearthing of them really comes down to a transcendent interpretation, which was after all the safety valve incorporated in chapter 10? Our attack must be justified and in order to justify it we must be somewhat less brief.

The big question is, is it incontrovertibly true that Sierksma's presuppositions are 'Reality' as a conglomeration of atoms, plus the eccentric centre?

The presuppositions are, after all, not really so entirely implicit. At the beginning of his book Sierksma speaks of our perceptions in which we 'make the world different from what it is in reality'.<sup>1</sup> And at the end he states equally explicitly that the result of deprojection through Buddhism is that: 'The whole of perception is thus exposed as projection. Nothing else is possible. If in extreme eccentric objectivity the inner and outer worlds are viewed as chance conglomerations, then perception, which is the fusion of the two conglomerations, is wiped out as well.'<sup>2</sup>

It could be objected, however, that in the first quotation Sierksma does *not* say that the world as it is in reality is a conglomeration of atoms. On the contrary, he continues: 'What the world looks like in reality is hard to decide and it is psychologically speaking not important.'<sup>3</sup> Moreover the second quotation is referring to the result of Buddhist deprojection, which again need not be identical with

<sup>1</sup> Sierksma, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 219f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



Sierksma's own presuppositions. Are we not bound to take into consideration that Sierksma is intending to give a purely phenomenological description – without presuppositions? Is not his religious psychology simply an attempt at an exact phenomenological reproduction of the religious phenomenon? Is this not in fact indicated in the sentence we have already quoted ('What the world looks like in reality . . . is psychologically . . . not important.')? Is it not implicit here that the psyche forms a world of its own which is immanently describable; so that in that description only the psychical world and not the world of reality appears? It might also be said that 'the' presupposition cannot and should not be distilled from two short quotations.

To this it must be answered that it is evident that the presupposition of 'Reality' as a conglomeration of atoms plus the eccentric centre is the basis of the book, for without this the whole argument falls to the ground. Throughout the whole of the book the reader asks himself, somewhat impatiently, why everything is as the writer says it is. Why is the 'will to truth, which leads to a divorce between objective reality and subjective appearance'<sup>1</sup> fundamental to man? Why is projection a problem of perception?<sup>2</sup> What does the statement that 'the world of man' is constituted 'by his (i.e. man's) eccentric-psychical-sensory organization'<sup>3</sup> imply; and what is the absolute sphere of thought in which this 'world of man' is constituted? For what reason can one call man an 'incarnate paradox'<sup>4</sup> and yet as man oneself calmly proceed to give a dissertation on man? What is pure observation and how wide is the domain of projection when Sierksma says 'just because men and animals "reform" the world since they are unable "purely" to observe it, they cannot do other than organize it subjectively, i.e. project it'<sup>5</sup> And so we could continue. Really all these 'whys' come down to two: why is man here reduced to a critically registering being and why is the whole normative world, the sensory world and by far the greater part of the perceived world, projection? The answer can only be – not only on the basis of a few quotations but on the evidence of the whole book – because the sphere of thought is restricted to a conglomeration of atoms observed by an empty subject.

The notion that psychology has no presuppositions and can give a purely phenomenological description is incidentally denied by

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.



Sierksma himself. He repeatedly points out that psychology is based on anthropology: 'In this treatise . . . I have preferred to take the relationship between living being and environment as the foundation of perception and projection, while the distinction between inner and outer world in this context found an organic place as the eccentric complication of the concentric animal form of life.'<sup>1</sup> And: 'Phenomenological anthropology and comparative psychology must produce the fundamental concepts for an adequate consideration of projection phenomena. Only in this way can any attempt be made to tabulate these phenomena. Without a cadre as tabular framework, it is impossible to escape the danger of arbitrariness.'<sup>2</sup> Splendid; but what cadre? Is anthropology – in this case the doctrine of eccentricity – a reliable cadre? Is it even phenomenological, given up entirely to the establishment of facts, without presuppositions and thus non-arbitrary? On the contrary, we have found in it the presupposition of reality as a conglomeration of atoms plus the eccentric centre. Without this the whole argument falls to the ground. It by no means follows, however, that with it the argument holds water. The presupposition leads only to the negative conclusion that the whole world of religion can be no more than a subjective modification of the objective world and thus a projection. Even the positive statement that there is a subjective modification of the objective world is not contained in the presupposition and cannot therefore, as we have seen, be extracted from it. Atoms plus an eccentric centre do not contain a subjective world.

In point of fact, with Sierksma, as with all theories built up on too narrow a basis, we have to distinguish between two types of presupposition. We have named one of them, and it determines the course of the book: from emptiness of meaning to subjective appearance and back to emptiness of meaning. The other group of presuppositions consists of 'common sense', with its conception of the realities of everyday life. This group consists of what is apparently a matter of course and it therefore remains more concealed than the first group, to which it is incidentally in direct contradiction. But because of the concealment the contradiction is also hidden, and this group lends a certain plausibility to the argument. The first presupposition – 'Reality' as a conglomeration of atoms – is the backbone of the exposition; the second group makes any exposition at all possible.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 232f.

Let us now illustrate some aspects of the argument with a few comments.

1. The presupposition of 'Reality' as a conglomeration of atoms plus eccentric centre implies the presupposition that the real world is empty of meaning. In this form the presupposition is explicitly named several times by Sierksma, but in such a form that it is impossible to be sure whether he intends it *as* presupposition or as a statement of observed fact. 'Man . . . can constantly attempt to get to the bottom of himself and in doing so he is also trying to find out what is "at the back of" the truth. But as ego . . . he stands . . . unlocalized in nothingness and ends up in nothingness . . .'<sup>1</sup> (Sierksma here quotes approvingly from Plessner.) 'One party stresses that man stands unconfined; the other does not try to shut its eyes to the fact that he is standing in the cold.'<sup>2</sup>

2. Among the basic concepts of the book are the correlatives subjective-objective. They are used, however, in three different senses.

(a) the outer world is objective; the inner world is subjective.

(b) whatever man has objectified (in the sense of has set over against himself) is objective; direct, unconsidered experience is subjective.

(c) the world as it is in reality is objective; error or appearance is subjective.

These meanings are confused – (a) and (b) deliberately so: what is subjective inner world according to (a) can be objectified, turned into the objective, according to (b). But the unconscious confusion of (a) and (c) is the background of the whole book: what is subjective inner world according to (a) is subjective, in the sense of being mere appearance, according to (c).

3. Let us quote once more: 'What this world [i.e. the world as it is in reality] looks like in reality is hard to decide and it is psychologically not important.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, in this book we are not dealing with the world as it is in reality but with the human world, i.e. the world according to human conception. ' . . . the world of man is thus also constituted by his eccentric-psychical-sensory organization.'<sup>4</sup> In other words, the world according to human conception is constituted by a small part of this world. At this point the brain begins to reel. What sense does it make when someone says that a not-true world is constituted by a part of this not-true world? Is this assertion itself not true either? But the writer expects me to accept his assertion as

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

true. I can only recover my balance by realizing that no assertion at all can be intended to be left stuck in relativities. Even if an assertion deals with relativities, it still intends to say something absolute about them. Sierksma proceeds from what is for him the absolute reality. What is this? It is the conglomeration of atoms plus the absolute subject.

4. We quote: 'The so-called objective character of religious experience is based on the hidden aspect of man and his world which causes a man to become conscious of his own inadequacy. . . .'<sup>1</sup> And 'This inadequacy . . . is the basis of religion.'<sup>2</sup> In what respect is man inadequate? 'Inadequacy' presupposes a norm against which this inadequacy is measured. What or who is this norm? Here is one of those concealed presuppositions which militate against the presupposition of an absolute reality empty of meaning.

5. The presupposition of an absolute reality empty of meaning as spectacle for the absolute subject leads to the result that the I-Thou dimension is missing from the whole book. Sierksma does indeed mention the word 'I-Thou relationship',<sup>3</sup> but the thing itself, the encounter with the other, is missing. He even says: 'If one wishes to remain formally anthropological one can here substitute without scruple "the other object" for "the other person".'<sup>4</sup> As far as we can remember we have never come across a crasser example of blindness towards the irreducibility of the I-Thou dimension.

Is it really necessary to deny everything that has been thought in the past? Could Sierksma not have been warned by Heinrich Rickert that the real is not enough; there are also values? And if he shared Heidegger's objections to value as another 'present thing', could he not have learnt from Heidegger that 'being-present' is not the primal characteristic of being? And if he shared Martin Buber's objection to the leaving out of a dimension even in Heidegger, could he not have learnt from Buber that I-Thou is a dimension of its own, separate from the I-It dimension? And if he objected to Buber's 'the eternal Thou', was not the Bible there as the final, corrective court of appeal?

6. Every psychology presupposes either a particular form of reality (localization of the object of psychology in 'Reality') or a particular form of being (localization of the object of psychology in the sphere of being). But a particular conception of the scientific method always goes together with the conception of a particular form of reality or of being. What is Sierksma's conception of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141.

scientific method? 'Scientific means primarily the degree to which a particular theory satisfactorily explains the phenomena.'<sup>1</sup> 'The right of science to look behind phenomena for their explanation . . . the duty of every science to arrive at what is "behind the truth".'<sup>2</sup>

We are now bound to ask, what are phenomena? What does 'behind phenomena' mean? What is 'explanation' and what is implied in the expression 'arrive at what is "behind the truth"'? In order to get behind something I have to go round it. That is clear. 'Because man can confront himself with himself and can see round himself, he can also confront things, objects, and can see round them.'<sup>3</sup>

We do not have to look very far for an answer. The presupposition that the nature of man lies in his eccentric structure ('This eccentric structure makes him man'<sup>4</sup>) determines Sierksma's conception of the scientific attitude as well. Observe, analyse, reduce to – these are in the foreground; and Sierksma sees the danger himself. 'It is a generally recognized fact that in looking for an explanation behind human phenomena one frequently oversimplifies because in the science of man subject and object are identical.'<sup>5</sup>

The presupposition of the sphere of being leads to a very different conception of the scientific attitude. We have outlined this in discussing the limits of rational thinking. The scientific attitude means clinging to the factual truth. In this factual truth, which has the character of utterableness on the basis of utterance, the thing itself is revealed.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

*Ibid*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152.



## 13 · The Religious Projection

We have subjected Sierksma's book *De religieuze projectie* to considerable criticism – criticism which Sierksma made easy for us. Having criticized the book, are we now finished with the thing that Sierksma is dealing with? Is there such a thing as religious projection? If there is, how far does it extend? Are the worlds of all other religions subjective illusions, the Christian world being the sole exception? Does intellectual honesty not compel us to drop this final reserve and admit that the world of Christianity could be subjective illusion as well?

This question receives its pertinency from religious history and phenomenology. Christianity is one religion among many. It is not derivable from any other, but there are analogies. Other religions also speak of revelation, of holy scriptures, sin and grace, of gods or of one god. The differences are too great for all these religions to be true. But in view of the analogies and the consequently implied relativity, is it possible to adhere to the view that Christianity alone is true and that all other religions are false? This is the question of truth applied to Christianity. Is Christianity true? What do we mean by this question? Is God there and is Christianity therefore right when it says that he is there? And is God as Christianity says he is?

We must first observe that, if we are speaking of scientific method, truth and intellectual honesty, this is a curiously slanted question. Starting from a given subjectivity, i.e. a particular religion, the objectivity asserted in this religion is called in question. In mathematics the question would be put the other way round. There we do not start from the subjective views of a mathematician and then ask whether they correspond to an objective truth; we start from the objective mathematical truth and test the mathematician's subjective views against it. To this end we follow the objective mathematical truth in all its impersonality, thinking it through, and let it carry its

point. The objectivity is then the test of the subjectivity and not *vice versa*. The case would be no different if there were a number of differing but analogous mathematical systems all of which could not be true, so that we were forced to discard all but one. The objective would be the test of the subjective.

Why should we not approach religion in the same way? Here too we must test the subjective claim to truth against the objective truth itself. The factual name that is given to objective truth's declaration of itself is revelation. We must therefore test religion against revelation. But which revelation? We have just said that nearly every religion adheres to its own particular revelation. We must obviously look at revelation in its factualness. In order to do this we must take another viewpoint from the one we had at first. There we adopted an onlooker's attitude to the subjectivity of the various religions. Now, in order to judge the truth of this subjectivity, we must try to submit ourselves to the factualness of revelation. The factualness of revelation means God's revealing of himself to men in Christ through the Holy Spirit, as his own act, in which he is subject. It could now be queried, is this not a *petitio principii*? The question under consideration is the truth of Christianity. We said that the object of religion should not be tested against the subjectivity of a religion but *vice versa* – that the subjectivity must be tested against the objective truth. Now we have proceeded to define that objective truth, without circumlocution, as the truth of Christ. We have therefore premised what we had to prove – the truth of Christianity; a *petitio principii*. Must we not also allow the Mohammedan the right to see the objectivity of revelation in the revelation of the Koran and thus to start from his own *petitio principii*?

It is immediately clear that with such a train of thought we are once more approaching the matter from the wrong angle. We are again considering Islam as a religion, and thinking of Mohammedan theology. What we aimed to do, however, was to keep to the factualness of revelation. This factualness of revelation is only present when God himself speaks to us. We cannot demonstrate this to anyone else, but the fact remains – the fact that God in Christ manifests himself through the Spirit.

We arrived at this approach because we took the factualness of mathematics as a guiding line (we might just as well have taken another specialized science). This *tertium comparationis* remains, even if we note that the factualness of revelation is very different from the



factualness of mathematics. Consequently the detached attitude of the onlooker, who examines a thing and weighs it up, is no longer possible in the face of revelation. Revelation takes place in a completely different dimension. We are no longer in the dimension of the I-It relationship between thing and perceiving subject; we are in the dimension of the I-Thou relationship between God and man, a relationship which is *sui generis*, in which God is I and man Thou and which alone makes possible the I-Thou relationship between man and man. A further difference is that the mathematical object is always at the disposal of subjective attention and absorption, whereas God reveals himself according to his will without our having any control over the matter. All this means that the question of religious projection can only be answered through another attitude than that of detached observation.

But does that not mean that we have now strayed into another concept of truth, so that our answer to the question as to the truth of religion is no longer a reply to the same question and is thus no answer at all? The question was, is all religion projection? – a scientific question, or at least a question within the sphere of science, presupposing a scientific concept of truth. And the answer was, God reveals himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit – a dogmatic answer presupposing a biblical concept of truth. Is that not a *metabasis eis allos genos*? Is the biblical concept of truth totally different from the scientific one? Is the word truth consequently equivocal? If that were the case we should be condemned to an internal division in science and dogmatics and our answer would throw the question back while allowing it to torment us further in its own scientific, theoretical spheres.

The question really comes down to the truth of science and the truth of faith. Are the two totally different? We have already discussed the truth of science in investigating the limits of rational thought. Earlier we had exposed the presupposition of 'Reality' as a fiction. Then we asked ourselves if rational thinking in a specialized science does not form a self-sufficient whole, so that in place of the one reality, now exposed as a fiction, we have a number of smaller realities, one for each specialized science. We can now link on to our earlier discussion in answering the question whether the truth of science and the truth of faith are totally different. Two points are of importance:

1. We have established what scientific truth is in a purely pheno-

menological way. *Primarily* it is ontic truth. This ontic truth is objective. It is given (or better still, gives itself – as utterance of being) even when there is no human subject and no human science to participate in it. Ontic truth has – from a purely phenomenological point of view – the character of utterance. *Secondarily*, scientific truth is gnostic truth. This gnostic truth is subjective, being nothing else than participation in the ontic, objective truth.

Now the truth of faith is also *primarily* objective truth, and here too the objective truth is utterance, namely the utterance of God (*genitivus objectivus et subjectivus*). The utterance of God is Jesus Christ. *Secondarily* the truth of faith is subjective truth, namely participation in the objective truth. This participation is threefold. (a) There is a participation in Christ independent of belief or disbelief; the work of Christ in his threefold office as expression of God is objectively valid and efficacious for all men. (b) There is a participation in Christ in faith through the Holy Spirit. (c) There is also participation in the conceptual utterance of God, a formulation of the Gospel in words, an understanding of the Word which is at least in part an intellectual, abstract understanding; that is a condition of the possibility of proclamation, confession, dogmatics and theology. We could also call this last form of participation gnostic truth.

The truth of science and the truth of faith are thus both primarily objective, ontic utterances and secondarily subjective, gnostic participation in this ontic utterance. We can see, however, that the truth of faith is much richer than the truth of science. Jesus Christ is the utterance of God not only in words but in the whole of his work and more – in his person. For that reason the truth of science is disengaged, theoretical (directed towards the *theōrein*), ‘merely looking on’. The truth of faith is certainly conceptual as well, but it is more: it is existential. Does this difference condemn us to a permanent split between detached scientific universality and an existential ‘being requisitioned’ which cannot reach this universality? Here our earlier discussion is of relevance.

2. We saw that the universal theoretical disengagement of rational thought in science rests on presuppositions which have themselves the character of ‘relying-on-in-trust’. The presuppositions of what is theoretical and universal are themselves neither theoretical nor universal. How deep do these presuppositions go? We have seen that it is to varying depth. The presuppositions of physics are concerned with a reliance-in-trust on the regularity of nature, on the possibility

of expressing natural causality in mathematical terms, etc. They are certainly existential, but they do not extend to the depths where an existential choice has to be made. The presuppositions of religious psychology, religious history and religious phenomenology do extend to these depths. They concern the being of man. Here it makes a difference whether the presupposition is 'Reality' or God's saving activity – and an eminently factual difference. That means, however, that the contrast between the theoretical disengagement of science and faith's existential state of being-requisitioned disappears.

Scientific truth as theoretically disengaged utterance is in itself incomplete and tends towards the complete truth of which in the last resort we have no better paraphrase than to say that it is Jesus Christ. (This tendency is naturally not to be understood as logical implication or dialectical development but as an inner defect which cries out for remedy, as is the nature of any deficiency and especially this one.) Consequently it is *not* the case that we are compelled by scientific truth and intellectual honesty to reason more or less as follows: The way in which religion, with its different worlds of religious ideas, rites, etc., arises in man must be psychologically explicable. It is psychologically unscientific to admit a transcendent reality in explaining so-called revelation. Scientifically one is bound to arrive at a concept such as religious projection. This argument is not forced on us by scientific truth and intellectual honesty, because it too proceeds from a *petitio principii*, namely that science must be capable of an immanent explanation of 'Reality'. 'Reality' is thus presupposed, even if not necessarily in the crude form of a collection of atoms. Moreover this presupposition remains ambiguous, for the immanent, allegedly explicable reality may be psychical reality, human reality, animal reality or – 'Reality'.

At the beginning we put the question: is Christianity, in contrast to other religions, true? Is Christianity right? There will come a point when we can answer, yes; but first we must clarify the question and clear away false presuppositions about 'truth' and 'being right'.

The real, objective truth, not only of Christianity but of Christianity and all other religions, even atheism, is Jesus Christ; he is the truth, the utterance of God. It is against him that Christianity, other religions and also atheism are tested. In the primary meaning of truth one cannot therefore even ask whether Christianity is true, let alone whether it is right. Jesus Christ alone is true.

Subjective truth is participation in objective truth in three ways, as we have said:

(a) *Participation in the work of Christ, which is valid for everyone.* In this derived sense there is one truth, not of all religions but of all men, whether they know it or not. If the question has this truth in view, then it is wrongly formulated.

(b) *Participation in Christ by faith, through the Holy Spirit.* Is Christianity true? In as far as Christianity means this participation, the answer is yes. Is it right? In as far as Christianity can mean standing and speaking in the power of the Spirit, the answer is again yes. There is the 'right' of the cross of Christ. If, however, by Christianity is meant this religion among many others past and present, then we shall not be able to establish that it is as such true in this sense, i.e. that it participates in Christ by faith through the Holy Spirit. Neither shall we be able to deny it. That is a matter for God's judgment and grace.

(c) *Participation in the utterance of God as conceptuality.* Is Christianity true as a verbally formulated creed, as dogmatics, as theology? We now mean, does it speak the truth about God; which again means, does it speak about God according to Jesus Christ? It can be seen that the question of the truth of Christianity has altered its character even here, where we are concerned with the truth of the formulations. First the question put to us was, 'Is it as Christianity says?' Now the question is, 'Does Christianity say as Christ is?' Does God in Christ say yes to our dogmatics?



## 14 · Historicism

In discussing secularization we have sought for direction in a number of different sciences, first astronomy, then biology and psychology. Our concern has been not so much secularization *within* these sciences themselves as the existential bias on their periphery. As a result of this existential bias we noted an inner defect in psychology, whereas in biology the defect was confined to the interpretation of the basic organic category. This, however, belongs rather to the philosophy of biology than to biology itself. We offered no criticism of astronomy, i.e. physics. But, as we have said, our concern was with existential bias on the periphery of these sciences. We met this in their imprisonment in the fiction of 'Reality' and their consequent obliviousness to what we called the sphere of being, that is to say the saving activity of God.

We now come to the discipline of history. Here too we are less concerned with secularization in historical scholarship itself than with its peripheral existential bias. Here too the bias is imprisonment in the fiction of 'Reality' and forgetfulness of God's saving activity. Here, in the face of history, this bias is particularly influential, however, for it is God's saving activity that is constitutive for history. Forgetfulness of the sphere of being robs history of its essence, just as it robs man of his. It would appear, therefore, that secularization affects historical scholarship in the same way as it does psychology. This is not, however, the case. The relation of methodological idea to method is quite different in history from what it is in psychology. Up to now psychology has failed to find its methodological idea and consequently its method. Historical scholarship has its methodological idea and also its established method, but the method is not in harmony with the methodological idea. Nevertheless, it is not our intention to criticize either the method or the methodological idea of historical scholarship.

But in what, then, does the secularization of our attitude to history and our being in history really consist? The elusiveness of secularization is more evident here than anywhere else. A hard and fast concept miscarries before we know it. Secularization contains a contrast between 'formerly' and 'now' and a transition from one to the other. There is today real discomfort in our being in history which was not there before. There is therefore a transition from then to now. But it would be a distortion of the facts if we were to see in that the real secularization of our being in history. We must turn our attention to this point first of all. We must therefore analyse our present discomfort with regard to history, then analyse the 'formerly', seen from our contemporary point of view as a contrast, and finally ask if we are not deluding ourselves in considering that we here have secularization in our grasp.

At the present time there is manifest discomfort in our being in history. Here we must of course first of all take into account our apocalyptic period, with its two world wars in one generation, the subsequent dangerous technical, political and military development and, in the midst of it all, the euphoria of an ever-increasing prosperity. But that has only indirectly to do with secularization (as regards the prosperity) or with de-secularization (as far as the apocalyptic aspect is concerned). The discomfort that we mean can be summed up in the word historicism.

Historicism is an attitude to and a being within history; it has grown up with the great impetus which has overtaken historical scholarship in the last two centuries. Existential attitude and scholarly method are here not simply cause and effect; they are two sides of the same thing. In historicism man has become conscious of his being in history, and in a particular way; namely that history is about man's ability to be. Human existence means that man has to develop a design for himself which will fulfil the potentialities of his being; and at the same time he has to carry out this design. The potentialities of being embrace the material conditions of existence – the need for food, clothing and shelter – and also being-together socially, economically and politically. Especially, however, they involve the capacity for being in its authenticity which, in accordance with the eternal meaning of existence, transcends the temporal, or even the transcending of the temporal which lies in the despairing, dogged or perhaps even vital rejection of this eternal sense. Moreover the potentialities of being toward which man's own design strives do not lie open to free



personal choice and individual exploitation. Humanity finds itself cast into a certain situation, man finds himself already in a community in which certain possible material conditions of existence have been realized, with an established social, economic and political structure and, above all, with a particular religion and a particular atheism. A man's design for himself is not completely free but is supported by a particular cadre – supported, though not bound. For in complete freedom of design there would be no particular possibilities, no real potentialities of being and thus also no real being at all; since if everything is possible without limitation, nothing is *concretely* possible. That is what history is about. It is not yet, however, history. It only becomes history through the disturbing experience that this cadre in which man stands does not remain unaltered. History means that stability is an illusion. In as far as this affects the material conditions of existence it can be surmounted; where it affects the social, economic and political structure of being-together it is more disturbing; but when applied to the real being of man it is calamitous, since this real being is his development of a design for himself in the direction of an eternal significance. How can that be possible within a cadre which is itself exposed to the vicissitudes of history and is thus no cadre at all? We have then arrived at a *relativism* which knows all the facts but which cannot cope with this developing of a design for oneself in the direction of an eternal significance; which views this design as illusory, holding that there is no absolute significance but only relative aims, relativities which man only believes are absolute as long as he knows nothing about history. This relativism, then, is *historicism*. Historicism stands *beside* history in the role of onlooker, noting with interest how the existential model has changed in the past. And not only how, but why it changed. It traces the causes of historical events. History has its own causality, one which is quite different from natural causality or even biological causality. Natural causes certainly have a place in historical causality in as far as they affect material conditions of existence; the main factors, however, are spiritual, man's inability to reach his design of eternal significance. This design covers practically the whole of human existence, also absorbing everyday existence-in-the-world; hence the multifariousness of history. In schools there is a one-sided emphasis on social, economic and political history. But there is also the history of religion, church history, history of dogma, history of the various sciences, history of civilization, history of art, literary history, etc.

Historicism means inner despair. If we have recognized the relativity of all existential meaning we can no longer exist and it only remains for us to stand aside and take up the aesthetic attitude. Of course man must exist; but that is precisely the reason for his despair – that in historicism he is forced to do what is not in his power.

If historicism means recognizing the relativity of everything historical and if it is only today that historicism has given this check to human existence, then we must conclude that in the past the relativity of the historical was not recognized to the same degree. Men evidently lived more naively, believing that the cadre of one's own existential design was absolute.

So something has changed. Is this change a form of secularization? If we keep to our earlier provisional definition, that secularization is the process whereby the world is de-divinized, then the answer is yes. But is this really of any interest to us? Formerly men had not to the same extent an eye for the mutability and relativity of all human interpretation; we are a wiser and a sadder generation. That is a form of secularization within historicism. But in so talking we are making historicism, which is itself relativism, absolute. It ends up with our proceeding anew from the presupposition of 'Reality' – not now as a conglomeration of atoms, but as self-contained human existence – a human existence which is no longer, as in the Cartesian scheme, an inner world closed in from the outer; as being-in-the-world it now also includes the outer world. Existentially and in its categories, it is a much 'wider' reality. Can we call it 'reality' at all? We have defined reality as the self-contained whole of mutual *homogeneous* effects. Are 'effects' in human existence as being-in-the-world still homogeneous? Difficulties arise here for the ideal of explanatory science: the inner inconsistency and impossibility which were inherent from the beginning in the presupposition of 'Reality'. Yet here the presupposition is even more wholesale than in its cruder forms. For the presupposition of inner completeness and the self-contained character of human existence is of decisive importance for historicism.

If, then, we are to speak of secularization, here it is historicism itself which is secularization. And the answer is still the same: 'Reality' must be replaced by 'the sphere of being' as a presupposition. That means in this case that the relativity of everything historical must be tested against revelation. We have spoken of this in the previous chapter. What was said there about religious projection applies equally to everything historical in as far as, as in historicism,

this is interpreted as projection. But to the extent that it is human interpretation, everything historical is relative – related to God. If, because of a falsely conceived scientific attitude, we think that we cannot go along with this true presupposition, then we must see to it that we do not, without meaning to, proceed from the false presupposition of a self-contained reality.

But this reference to the previous chapter is not enough. As far as historicism is concerned, we have certainly reached a certain conclusion, but we are still at the very beginning as regards historical secularization. Conclusion and beginning are both inherent in the statement that everything historical must be tested against revelation. Meanwhile we can say that two groups of questions arise.

1. Revelation is itself history. Not only that: it is real history. Revelation is not insight into a timeless essence, and God is not this timeless essence. God acts. He enters into time. His eternity is not a contrast to time. But if the divine revelation is real history, what about what we normally call 'history'? Is it parallel to real history? Or is it only appearance? Or purely evil? And if God acts, what about human activity? Is there human activity parallel to divine activity? Or is human activity only appearance? Or purely evil? Further, if revelation is real history, does that not mean that real history is predetermined in the eternal purpose of God? But is a predetermined history history at all? Is not one of the historical categories precisely the character of being non-determined, free, able to choose any direction? What are the categories of real history, the historical categories in the real sense? In putting these questions, however, we are not proposing to develop a programme for its discussion.

2. What about historical scholarship? This applies to what we normally call history. The problems thrown up by history make historical scholarship problematic as well. How far is historicism implicit in historical scholarship as it is practised today?

## 15 · What is History? · 1

Revelation is the real history. Revelation is not insight into a timeless essence, and God is not this timeless essence. God acts. He enters into time and his eternity is not a contrast to time.

Conscious being in history reaches us in the Jewish and Christian tradition<sup>1</sup> and there alone. It is a unique phenomenon in the history of civilization. This is in conformity with the particular way in which Israel was conscious of history, seeing itself as God's chosen people, set aside from other nations. As such, the revelation of history was given to it through its existence, through its rebellion and its sufferings and, arising from these, through what it had to say and through what it knew. This is the origin of the concept of history with which we are still living, which we can deny but not annihilate or replace by something else. This too is the basis which makes historical scholarship possible.

Consequently a phenomenological description, 'the concept of history in Jewish and Christian tradition', is not enough. Our scholarly conscience appears to demand a detachedly disengaged phenomenological description of the concept of history held by the Jews and later by Christians and we seem to be committing the scholarly sin of exceeding our terms of reference if we take up a particular point of view ourselves. But this apparently scholarly disengagement and avoidance of a point of view simply eliminates the object of our research, i.e. history in its 'knownness'. We exist in history; if the concept of history is defined in terms of disengagement then our existence is hypothetically excluded; but then there is no longer a concept of history either.

This applies to us because it applied – as it still does – to Israel. Israel's existence as a nation was conferred on it through the cove-

<sup>1</sup> The following is taken from my article 'De geschiedenis', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 15, 1961, pp. 353-365.

nant that God made with his people. It was a covenant with a nation that did not yet exist, and that only became a nation and remained one through this covenant, in spite of dispersal, ghetto and persecution. Israel existed by reason of God's election. As always, the logic of election is not dependent on the logical contrast of rejection. Israel was chosen not for the rejection of others but for their salvation. The covenant with Abraham was not a limitation but an electing and intensifying ratification of the covenant with Noah; the covenant with Noah stands in a similar relation to the covenant with 'Adam'. In the history of Israel God acts in a similar way: Judah is elected; then the 'remnant'; finally Jesus.

What is the *origin* of the covenant, what is the *reason* for it, what is its *end*? The answer to all these questions is the same: the liberty of God, who need not account for his actions, whose presence is salvation, the denial of whose presence is perdition; and who affirms again and again, in spite of the unfaithfulness of his people, that he is merciful and faithful, that he wills the salvation of men and that he will be present among them.

The temporal *origin* of the covenant lies in the choosing of Abraham. But this origin points further back, to Noah, to 'Adam', to the eternity of God. Because his people break the covenant it does not continue, automatically and legally, to exist. It only exists by virtue of God's daily ratification. It has a unilateral existence, for God upholds it while his people falls away. Thus the origin of the covenant is new day by day.

What is the *motive*? We must not turn the covenant into a legal affair. Its motivation is not intellectually calculable. The question of motive can only end in a hymn of praise to the unmotivated love and faithfulness of God.

The *end* of the covenant is its renewal in another order in which God's gracious presence will have overcome the hindrances which he now still suffers. This order cannot be crystallized in clear images. If images are used at all they should preferably be quite ordinary ones, such as a companionable sojourn in one's own garden. But the real meaning of the kingdom of God and the way in which it differs entirely from our present experience is that God will give his Spirit in the heart and that his people will live under his unclouded pleasure. Consequently what happens in the covenant is directed towards a future which is fixed in the incalculable liberty of God.

By this, events today are also determined. God's actions are always

new and unexpected, yet confirm his faithfulness to the covenant. All events are related to this. His people goes its way, coming from the making of the covenant and proceeding towards its consummation. This means that his people goes its way in the daily presence of God. God bears witness to himself in his Word. He gives his law – the ordinances which regulate existence so that this life is shot through hour by hour with God's faithfulness. This is the keynote of life in the covenant – even when the presence of God is a burden to his people because they have faithlessly broken that covenant. Then God comes with judgment, allowing the kings of successive empires to enforce his punishment, even to the extent of the pain of the destruction of the Temple and the exile. Yet even here God witnesses to his faithfulness; the punishment is the very assertion of the covenant. To be chosen is salvation and joy, although measured by prosperity and ease of life it is horror and desolation.

That is the course of events – that is history – according to the Old Testament. These happenings are concrete, so concrete that they can be related, passed down, committed to writing. They embrace the creation, the disobedience of man, the choosing of Abraham and the *faits et gestes* of the patriarchs, including the financial transactions (which were an important part of the covenant, concerned as it was with the people's intercourse with God and with God's fostering care). They embrace the bringing of the people out of Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness with their climax in the conferring of the law, which was also the climax of the people's unfaithfulness; the 'battles of the Lord' in the glorious course of taking possession of the promised land, with all that we find so offensive and try without success to smooth away; the setting up of the monarchy with its peculiar mixture of reluctant permission and active blessing on the side of God, culminating in the kingdom of David; the 'histories' of the kings with (apart from a few exceptions) the monotonous refrain of 'and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord'; the carrying away of the ten tribes and the exile of the remnant; and the restoration.

The history of the covenant is fundamental. God makes it, he is its subject. His people – man – is taken into it. God speaks, man may answer – that is the form of the covenant. Consequently it is impossible to secularize this history. Secularized, it simply ceases to be history. Here we must not forget that God does not bind himself to a particular interpretation of events, not even interpretation according to the witness of the prophets in the canon, but that on the contrary



he points to the prospect of a radical renewal of the covenant and with it a new interpretation. History must not take the place of the divine liberty, belief in history must not take the place of belief in God.

This is confirmed by the 'marginal' witnesses – Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs – marginal witnesses which are yet of central importance. They warn us against making a system out of the covenant and a fixed scheme out of events into which past, present and future can be fitted, ceasing to be past, present and future. God is not bound to his covenant; the covenant is God himself. It is what he is and will be what he will be.

The New Testament is the continuation of the Old: the covenant is made in Christ. Events continue and it is impossible to order those to which the New Testament witnesses other than into the continuing history of the covenant. This does not mean that it is not new – on the contrary. The old is new in its continuation; election proceeds to its utmost limit in the choice of the One; the presence of God continues in a completely new way: the Father is realized in the Son. The covenant is revealed in a completely new form: as covenant within the divine Trinity which, through the Son, also embraces man. The covenant remains a continuing speech and answer, but the answer is now given by God himself as representative of his people. But here, too, the new is a continuation of the old.

The course of events now receives a powerful impetus. Within a few weeks the decisive happenings foretold from the beginning come to pass: cross, resurrection, ascension, the gift of the Spirit. Is it surprising that the first Christians, and perhaps Jesus himself, thought that this new historical tempo would continue with the speedy return of the Lord, and that the end of time (the 'Day of the Lord') had come?

Here it becomes apparent what we are really dealing with, what 'happening' is and what we mean when we speak of 'history'. The point is that God maintains his rights. He is who he is *in this happening*. And it is in confrontation with the God who in this happening is who he is that we are who we are. Consequently it is pointless when confronted with the divine historical revelation to appeal to any primal knowledge which we could have about God, but it is just as pointless to deny this knowledge; we *are*, in that God calls us into existence through the medium of history. Historicity, it must be noted,

is not a subsidiary law of human existence; it is a constituent feature of it. Well and good – as long as we do not replace God, who is the source of all concreteness, by an abstraction. This happening is ontically more primal than ourselves; consequently it cannot be interpreted or denied on the basis of an ontological scheme of a different origin.

God is who he is in this specific happening (from the cross to the gift of the Spirit; from creation to consummation) and in it he maintains his rights. These rights are the rights of his love. That is why everything is so strange. If God is concerned here with the execution of his pretemporal purpose then it is surely here if anywhere that he will begin to act. It is true that according to the standards of worldly innovations something special really did happen here, taking a long term view, for Christianity is certainly a ‘historical’ power of the first rank; but the beginning of the central series of events, the cross, was not outwardly of such world-shaking importance and moreover it did not look as if God was being particularly active. God in his Son was suffering, not active.

That, then, is the course of history; God executes his purpose in an ordered progress from creation to consummation. It is his will to be glorified in his creation. Only God himself is the ground of being, the meaning and the joy of his creation. His standards are different from ours. God’s eternity does not hold aloof from time and events; being does not culminate in timelessness. God goes his way in the majesty of his self-surrender. It is not his pleasure to enforce his actions in his supreme power as the one who acts. He lets his creation be creation and that means that he gives every being the individual freedom designed for it and himself respects this freedom. Man too is given his rights. But what are the rights of man? Not to perish in self-determination but to respond to God’s love. Human freedom cannot compete with God’s freedom, the rights of man cannot compete with the right of the love of God. How is it possible for the primal freedom of God and the received freedom of man to go hand in hand?

With this question we have arrived at an important crossroads in our thinking about history. For another version of the same question is, how can real history (the history of salvation) and human history go hand in hand? It is this question which brings us to the crossroads – namely this: are the history of salvation and human history two different orders, one based on the divine freedom and the other on

human freedom? Or does history only come into being when the divine and the human freedom go hand in hand? In this case there is no separate history of salvation and no separate human history. In the next chapter we shall have to take up the question again at this point.

The era *ante Christum natum* is flanked by the era *post Christum glorificatum*. Let us look at this second era.

The definitive thing has happened. Christ is risen. The definitive thing is about to happen. Christ is coming again. Does anything fundamental happen between these two points?

This question arises with increasing urgency in the period 'between'. Yet the answer is obvious. The essential happening in this period is the preaching and effectiveness of the Gospel as this is commanded and conferred in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This too is the continuance of the covenant; new as renewal of the old.

But this answer is made difficult by the delay of the Parousia. The early church expected the speedy end of history. It adjusted its life accordingly. But when this expectation was disappointed it had to adjust itself again. It had to learn to keep step with the pace of time, to see itself as a temporal section of God's plan of salvation. It had to grasp anew that God includes man in history. It had to bear the weight of the mystery that God has a place for human freedom in the execution of his purpose.

The church had to learn this; but where does the church end? It is a question whether these things do not determine the face of our time even where they are not – or are no longer – or are not yet – understood. Our time cannot find the right relationship to time, it cannot endure it. The reckless exploitation of raw materials, political, technical and economic organization, all indicate that a world plan of only a few decades is being tacitly reckoned with. Events are certainly in God's hand, but the *confrontation* in the event has become unstable.

A second difficulty is the conclusion of the canon. If this means that the living Word of God no longer accompanies events, that would mean that 'happening' had detached itself from the world. 'Happening' is only given to the world through the living Word of God. If the conclusion of the canon means that the Word is no longer new, then nothing more is happening on earth; in that case *happening* has withdrawn itself into the seclusion of God and there

is a historical vacuum in the world which will last until the second coming.

But this is not so. The Word is actual; it determines today and determines it daily; it is creative. The conclusion of the canon does not inhibit Word and Spirit. The Word comes to us also and consequently today *is*, the covenant goes on happening, and we too stand in the midst of history.

## 16 · What is History? · 2

We have already asked what history is and we have attempted to give a fair answer. Have we been successful? We tried not to reduce the fullness of historical being to what modern self-assuredness considers the maximum allowable. We have not, however, succeeded in giving a conceptual definition of the nature of history. Is it possible to define it conceptually at all? It is a delicate undertaking, for we easily fall into the temptation of confining history within a definition which does not do justice to its nature. The nature of history is at the same time its enigma; namely the two interwoven strands of the freedom of God and the freedom of man. Delicate though the undertaking may be, however, it must surely be possible to describe the nature of history conceptually, i.e. to find a definition for it. And the question 'What is history?' has a definition as its target. We must not, however, force the issue. If questions arise they must either be answered first or the definition must take account of their unanswerability. Let us now attempt to move towards a definition and in addition to examine at least one question more closely.

This question was already raised in the previous chapter. It is the question of the relation of the history of salvation to human history. We asked: 'Are the history of salvation and human history two different orders, one based on the divine freedom and the other on human freedom? Or does history only come into being when the divine and the human freedom go hand in hand? In this case there is no separate history of salvation and no separate human history.'

The question here is therefore the relationship between the history of salvation and *human* history. We have not yet arrived at the relationship between the history of salvation and empirical history. It is questionable whether human history is the same as empirical history. We shall deal with empirical history and historical scholarship later.



The first lemma of the dilemma we have adduced was: the history of salvation and human history are two different orders, the first based on the divine freedom and the second on human freedom. This means that God is the subject or author of the history of salvation, man is the subject or author of human history. This division cannot be absolute, however, for two reasons. First, man participates in salvation and this participation belongs both to the history of salvation and to human history. Secondly, the history of salvation includes actions in which man is the subject, for example some of Pilate's decisions. How are we to interpret this? As an encroachment of the divine freedom on the human? In Rom. 9.16-18 we read: 'So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of knowing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.' If this is an encroachment of the divine on human freedom, is not human freedom nullified? Is it not only the mere appearance of freedom, human actions being in reality determined by God? If that is the case, is the determinism only incidental, so that God only intervenes in the progress of events now and again and here and there, or is it all-embracing, so that man is a puppet moved by God? In that event there would be no human freedom and man would not be the subject of his actions; the one, exclusive subject would be God.

We find ourselves therefore set about with questions and difficulties. Can we stop short at the dilemma from which we started? Are we not rather faced with a tetralemma? The four lemmata are:

1. The history of salvation and human history are two different orders, the first based on the freedom of God, the second on the freedom of man. God is the subject of the history of salvation, man is the subject of human history. There are two histories.

2. History only comes into being when the freedom of God and the freedom of man go together. A history then exists in which God as subject and man as subject go together.

3. God and God alone is the subject of history.

4. Man and man alone is the subject of history.

The reason that we spoke earlier of a dilemma was because we wanted to exclude (3) and (4) straight away. We still do; but it is dangerous in this sphere to try by exclusion to arrive at the only possible solution, since that which remains after the exclusion still



has its difficulties. In theology and philosophy one should not proceed by exclusion, but by obedience to revelation. The crux, however, is that the Bible itself struggles with the problem of history (implicitly throughout; explicitly, e.g. Rom. 9-11). Consequently we must after all go into the lemmata of the tetralemma, prepared and hoping to find an opening which will shed new light on the whole. At the moment there is as yet no opening and we cannot avoid the tetralemma.

Lemma 1 – two histories and two subjects – cannot be carried to its logical conclusion. The division cannot be absolute. Both histories must become one at least incidentally, and if not incidentally but absolutely, then we have lemma 3, at which we must now look more closely.

Lemma 3 runs: God and God alone is the subject of history. Man is only subject in appearance. This is what is normally called predestination and as such is equated with election. This is at the very beginning a confusion of terms. The biblical datum on election consists in the fact that God has set aside man for a particular function in the carrying out of his work of salvation. All election is concentrated in the eternal choice of Jesus Christ to be the representative of all men. But this election is far from meaning that the chosen person becomes a puppet so that his character as subject is merged in God's character as subject. That would be neither election nor predestination but predetermination. Predetermination means that all human actions only have the appearance of being human actions; in reality they are divine ones. Only God is subject.

What should our attitude be to this? First, what is the biblical foundation? As far as individual texts go there is as far as I know not a single one that can be quoted to support complete predetermination, at least not unequivocally. The nearest approximation is the already quoted Rom. 9.16-18 ('So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. . . . [He has] mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills') and the continuation in Rom. 9.19-24 (the potter's power to do what he wants with the clay). Mercy and hardening, however, are personal categories relating to a 'Thou'; they do not go together with determinism, which is related to an 'It'; the image of the potter's power over the clay has no *tertium comparationis* in the depersonalization.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> We shall return to the question of the personal nature of God and man in Ch. 30.

golden rule of exegesis, however, is that texts must be interpreted in the light of the writing as a whole. With this in view, what is our attitude to be towards complete predetermination?

By complete predetermination we mean that God has decided all events in nature and history in advance.

This would mean that man is not man at all but a puppet; that he is not the subject, that is the originator (*auctor*) of his actions, but that God alone is subject; that God is in consequence also the author of sin. That is in contradiction to the Scriptures as a whole and is therefore the argument against predetermination.

But are we not disowning our Reformed inheritance? Calvin did not teach predestination for fun; and, in spite of the confusion of terms which we have pointed out, he also meant predetermination by it. There must therefore be an argument in favour. This argument is that the history of salvation is fixed in the counsel of God and that the execution of God's purpose cannot be frustrated by human actions. That is confirmed by the Scriptures as a whole.

We must, however, return to the 'pros and cons' for a moment. We held the argument against complete predetermination to be valid, but not the argument in favour of it. Those people who accept complete predetermination do not agree. The counter-argument was that complete predetermination meant that man is a puppet and that God is also the author of sin. On the other side, it is objected that the 'subjectness' of God represents an entirely different dimension from the 'subjectness' of man and that consequently complete predetermination does not exclude the latter. What is a freely committed action in the order of human activity is at the disposal of God in the other, unfathomable order of divine activity. And this order or dimension of God's free disposition is so entirely unfathomable that we cannot draw the conclusion that God is also the author of sin. Here, runs the argument, reason is out of its depth and we can have nothing to say. In the same context we also find the explanation that God has preknowledge – *praescientia* – of the fact that man will sin but is not himself the author of sin. True, this is in contradiction to complete predetermination, but in this order of the unfathomable counsel of God reason comes to a halt, and that gives rise to contradictions.

We are forced into this position if we accept the third lemma, that God and God alone is the subject of history. In its favour, as we said, was that the history of salvation is fixed in the counsel of God. This

is an important argument because the irresistibility of grace, the certainty of salvation and the rejection of synergism all link up with it. We asked, however, whether complete predetermination is essential for the irresistibility and certainty of grace. As a counter-argument, we pointed out that man becomes dehumanized, a puppet. We also mentioned the arguments of those who deny this conclusion. The arguments really come down to the suggestion that in the vertigo which seizes us when we are faced with the unfathomable counsel of God, our capacity for drawing conclusions stops. In this dimension logical thought is inadequate because our concepts are not adapted to it.

The reason why we cannot accept this argument is a decisive one: the divinity of God must not be seen as a different dimension from the humanity of man. Man is man in *confrontation* with God and consequently in one and the same dimension. The confrontation vouches for both the unfathomableness of God and the unity of the dimension. In the cross, God is the unfathomable; if we see this unfathomableness as difference of dimension, however, then we are taking no account of the resurrection. Then we are definitely interpreting the silence at the cross as the silence of positive divine abandonment. 'Freedom' is both freedom *from* and freedom *for*. Human freedom is freedom *from* determinism and freedom *for* the speech-answer relationship to God. Predetermination denies freedom *from*; and the consequent difference of dimension between the subjectness of God and the subjectness of man is a denial of the speech-answer relationship and consequently a denial of freedom *for* it. This abrogation of human freedom is abrogation of humanity and consequently abrogation of the humanity of Christ and of the grace of God. This cannot subsequently be made good by talk of vertigo in the face of the unfathomableness of God.

That is the reason why, failing clearer insight, we cannot accept the third lemma – cannot accept, that is, that God and God alone is the subject of history. Now a word to explain why we cannot accept the fourth lemma either, i.e. cannot accept that man alone is the subject of history. If man and man alone is the subject of history, that means that God has no association with the world. Thus salvation becomes a timeless matter and eternity becomes timelessness. Then in the place of a living God we have an 'eternal truth of reason' in the sense of Lessing's famous thesis that 'chance facts of history cannot prove the eternal truths of reason'. In this case deism and docetism

would be completely right. But all this is far removed from the Gospel.

The biblical message is that God cares about the world, that he acts both in nature and in history, and that his activity in history is itself history. Salvation has a historical dimension. We went into this in the previous chapter.

This does not mean that God and God alone is the subject of history. Questions remain open. For example, who takes the initiative in history, God or man? Does not the initiative lie in human sin? Has not human sin been the occasion for God to display his grace in the historical series of events from the making of the covenant to the second coming (the *felix culpa*)? Or was the historical unfolding of salvation foreseen even before the creation, so that the initiative is God's? But God's initiative cannot cover sin.

This does not mean that salvation has *only* a historical dimension, or extension in time. God's revelation has not only a temporal dimension but a dimension perpendicular to time as well, from eternity to today. Oscar Cullmann only speaks of the historical dimension (in time); Rudolf Bultmann only recognizes the eternity-today dimension (perpendicular to time); his call to demythologize really means to dehistoricize. We believe that both scholars leave out or deny something essential. Karl Barth, on the other hand, recognizes both dimensions.

## 17 · What is History? · 3

Our aim was, and still is, to give a definition of history, but we have been hindered by a quantity of difficulties and obscurities which had first to be examined. If we could solve the difficulties and clarify the obscurities, we should be on the way to the definition for which we are looking. If we can not solve the difficulties and clarify the obscurities, it does not follow that no definition is possible; but in this case the definition would have to take account of such difficulties and obscurities as remain.

The difficulty which we discussed in the previous chapter was the question of the combination of the freedom (or 'subjectness') of God and the freedom (or 'subjectness') of man in history, and, in this connection, whether there are two histories. Have we solved these difficulties and clarified these obscurities? Not really. We have set up four lemmata and rejected three of them; but it could not be said that the remaining lemma contains no further difficulties or is entirely clear. This remaining lemma was: history only arises when the freedom of God and the freedom of man go together. There is, then, a history in which God as subject and man as subject go together. This going together of the two freedoms and the unity of history present their own difficulties. But none the less, the problematical treatment of these questions was not without result. In the discussion of the difficulties, we arrived at insights which remain valid; but these insights did not fit together into a systematic whole in which the concept is stabilized.

It was not to be expected, however, that we should arrive at a systematic whole of this kind. A systematic whole of integrated ponderables is 'Reality'. But we have seen that 'Reality' has no being and must be replaced by the sphere of being, i.e. the sphere in which the saving activity of God is set. That means first of all a rejection of all antilogism. The saving activity of God begins and ends in the

Word. It is saturated with the divine intellectuality in which man may participate. But for that very reason it means also, in the second place, the rejection of all logism. "The idea projected as premise in "Reality" is one of thought that has become quiescent, for which all questions have been solved. But these questions must then cease to persist. "Reality" possesses the lifeless harmony of an object that can be conceived. God's saving activity, on the other hand, not only makes human thought possible; it embraces while it surmounts human actions, belief and states of mind. Moreover, God's saving activity is the warranty for the harmony of completion, but it assumes the disharmony of evil and sin. It makes thought and science possible but allows neither of them to become quiescent."<sup>1</sup>

The sort of definition of history that we are aiming at could therefore be: *History is any happening in so far as it is existentially determinative for us, as a unity and as a whole.*

This definition contains the evangelical assurance with its difficulties and obscurities; it contains it, however, implicitly and not explicitly. Because it includes the difficulties it is a merely provisional definition; because it contains the essentials in implicit form it is not the only definition possible.

We must now try to turn what is here implicit into what is at least more or less explicit.

What does 'existentially determinative' mean? Everything that relates to our being is existentially determinative; and our being is *per se* existence in confrontation with God. *Per se*; that means that man has no independent being as a biological type, or a unity of soul and body, or as being-in-the-world, after which, as an independent being, he enters into a connection with God – a connection which cannot add anything essential to man's being since that being was already constituted. No, our being is *per se* existence (we may think of the German word *Dasein*, literally 'being there') in confrontation with God; that is, it is constituted by the fact that God calls it into existence. God calls us into existence by revealing himself. He reveals himself through his speaking, and thus through his active, presence. Here we must be aware that we are using primal words, words in their primal sense which is not derived from the human sphere but which itself determines the structure of that sphere. One of the primal biblical words for the speaking and thereby acting presence of God is 'Logos'. The Word of God, God's self-revelation, is therefore

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 32.



not a neutral 'informing', but a creative calling-into-existence. And calling into existence also means compelling an answer. God's Word will not remain one-sided; it compels an answer – a compulsion which determines man's being. And God takes this answer seriously. What, then, is 'existentially determinative'? It is the Word of God which calls us to answer and our answer to this Word. And everything that belongs to this Word and to this answer, i.e. the situation in which the Word is spoken.

And now, what is '*Any happening*', in so far as it is existentially determinative for us'? To come anywhere near the answer, we must first notice that God's revelation, i.e. God's Word, has two dimensions; a dimension perpendicular to time, which sets us in 'today', and a dimension in time, the historical dimension. The dimension perpendicular to time is fixed by the fact *that* God speaks; the dimension in time by *what* he says.

Let us consider the first dimension: The Word is revelation, God revealing himself, God's speaking presence, Christ. The Word is immediate, that is to say it sets us in today. It is today in and through God's revelation. It is not that it is now this particular date on the calendar, that God revealed himself yesterday and that we have to live today from yesterday's revelation. That is impossible. God's revelation cannot grow old. It has no antecedents in a continuously advancing empiricism. Whenever God reveals himself is today. It is thus that man is confronted with the eternal God. The eternity-today dimension has no time component and is thus perpendicular to time. Although the Bible witnesses to Christ through an account of events that happened hundreds of years ago, the revelation in Christ puts us in today just as it did the apostles; in this way we are contemporary with the apostles. It is not that there is reality, and within reality time, and that God perhaps once, a long time ago, entered into it. But what then is the position? We are surely not living in a *nunc stans*, in an eternal today? There is surely also the continuity of happening in time? And if the Word of God compels an answer, this answer is surely only possible in time, in the continuity of the past which flows on into the future?

Hence we must consider the second dimension. The Word itself is happening. We must repeat, the Word is God's speaking presence, it is Christ. This Word is itself a happening – the happening from the creation to the consummation. It is divided by certain caesuras, including the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection and the ascension.

It is a happening in time which leads to the cross and begins again in the resurrection; and it is existentially determinative for us. The cross and resurrection are decisive for the being of all men and consequently for the meaning of every other temporal event. All this belongs to the core of the Gospel, and cannot be affected by whatever difficulties may arise from it. We may mention some of these difficulties. Is sin also a caesura in the historicity of the Word? Sin is after all decisive for God's plan of salvation. On the other hand, the subject of all the caesuras in the Word is God and God is not the subject of sin. This is connected with the question we discussed in the previous chapter: how do the 'subjectness' of God and the 'subjectness' of man combine in history – i.e. the freedom of God and the freedom of man? Further, what is the position with regard to the contingency of the 'happening' of the Word? Is it the execution of the pretemporal purpose of God? If so, how far does this predetermination extend? We can see that the definition we have given implies the difficulties which came to the fore in the previous chapter.

We have not yet, however, exhausted the definition. What does 'any happening *in so far as* it is existentially determinative' mean? The question at issue here is, is the *whole* of history included in the historical dimension of the Word?

The first dimension of the Word that we named fixes today, the historical dimension of the Word fixes time. But is everything determined by these two dimensions? It is true that our being is existence through confrontation with God; but is this God-confronted existence not also being-in-the-world? And is the world and being-in-the-world fixed by the two dimensions of the Word?

Here the complex of questions and difficulties widens out. First it concerned only the relationship of divine to human freedom. Now another freedom is added – the freedom of nature. Freedom is independence of being. Freedom of nature means that natural happenings occur according to an independent structure of being, known as the laws of nature. The question is now, is not the course of nature also existentially determinative? Do not natural events play a part in history? In the first place as background – for life has surely also a material basis; in the second place as conditions of existence – for climate, mineral resources, etc., are factors in history; in the third place as incidental natural happenings which can have a decisive influence on historical events.

The freedom, i.e. independence, of nature is occasionally conceived

of in unduly absolute terms and the freedom of God and the freedom of man is thereby denied. In that case, however, there would be no history.

The opposite, i.e. the denial of the freedom (or independence) of nature, would mean that all natural events are only seemingly free and are in reality divinely ordained. But is that not true? 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows' (Matt. 10.29-31). But does this mean that all natural events are directly caused by God, even volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and floods? The extent to which this question embarrasses us is shown by the sermons which are preached at times when it comes near home. Then all rational inferences, e.g. that they are punishments for sin, or that they are permitted by God in the interests of a fixed natural order, break down. Admittedly this is true of non-rational inferences (such as the unfathomable counsel of God) as well.

The question that is of importance for history is the question of God's foreknowledge in as far as this extends to natural events. Here too we find ourselves set about with difficulties. And here too it is understanding of the divine activity and the relation between time and eternity which is the keypoint.

So all these difficulties are implicit in the 'in so far as' of our definition. History is any happening, in so far as it is existentially determinative for us, as a unity and as a whole.

Finally, let us look at the last phrase of the definition – 'as a unity and as a whole'. History is a unity and a whole in spite of all the difficulties which threaten to break it into fragments which then cease to be history. It is not that all these difficulties lie in the one scale as the non-biblical conception of history, while the other scale holds the biblical conception; the difficulties lie within the biblical concept of history itself. They are not a *con* that struggles with a *pro*; they themselves presuppose the *pro* of faith. They presuppose Jesus Christ, and thus history, and thus the unity and wholeness of the divine revelation.

Something must now be said about *empirical* history and the question of how far it represents a secularization.

The empiricism with which we are dealing is the consequence of the categories and methods of historical scholarship. We must there-

fore ask what historical scholarship is really aiming at, whether it is right in its aim and whether it achieves that aim.

Unlike philosophy and theology, historical scholarship is a specialized discipline and the possibilities and truth of a specialized discipline are least of all a matter of course. A specialized discipline is a cadre within the sphere of being, and the sphere of being is set by the saving activity of God. Which special cadres are possible cannot be established in a brief survey. For this sphere of being (belonging to the being of God who in his saving activity himself created being) is not spread out before us like a map. The origin of a specialized study lies in a methodological idea. Such a methodological idea is a tentative outline of a possible approach. But whether a possibility along these lines really exists cannot be said in advance. It can only appear in the course of the study, in the successful crystallization of the methodological idea into particular categories which can be applied within a particular method. The nature of this success, be it great or small, varies from one specialized discipline to another; no general rules can be drawn up. In addition, what we may call the depth of being in the methodological idea varies from case to case. In physics, the methodological idea was mathematically expressible causality; the depth of being was small; the success impressive. What is the methodological idea of historical scholarship? It is the knowledge of any happening, in so far as it is existentially determinative for us, as a unity and as a whole – with all the implications which we have tried to bring out. That means the biblical version of history. It is a methodological idea of great depth of being. The writing of history is only possible under Jewish-Christian influence; outside this there is only chronicle.

What is the position with regard to the crystallization of this methodological idea into historical categories and methods? It is unusual. Historical categories and methods, both of fairly firm structure, are certainly formed. To this extent one can speak of success. But it cannot be said that historical categories and the associated methods represent a *crystallization* of the methodological idea.

They cannot do so; for history as it is outlined in the methodological idea is any happening in so far as it is *existentially* determinative for us, as a *unity* and as a *whole*. It is a directed happening from creation to consummation. The historical material which can be empirically established is confined to happening in a brief past, about 6,000 years, and does not include future happening; it is thus only a

fragment, neither a unity nor a whole. Moreover it is impossible to establish *which* happening is existentially determinative. Constitutive for history is the fact that divine and human freedom go together; the freedom of God is not empirical and human freedom is only so in the caricatured form of 'feeling one's way'. It might be said that the principle of selection in historical scholarship is the existentially determinative element, but what is thus selected is not history, nor is it consistent. It is a collection of established facts which only have the appearance of connected history because they are animated by the methodological idea.

Is this a secularization? Not really. It cannot be said that historical scholarship must and could proceed differently. Secularization *in malam partem* would only arise if historical scholarship lost its sense of proportion and claimed to know history. Or if history were replaced by another methodological idea, e.g. the dialectic evolution of the spirit, *philosophie positive* or dialectical materialism.



## 18 · Secularization in Philosophy: First Motif

We now pass from the discussion of secularization in (or in connection with) some of the specialized sciences to a consideration of secularization first in philosophy and then in theology. In the course of this transition we find a certain lack of continuity in our theme. This is due to the difference in kind between the specialized sciences on the one hand and philosophy and theology on the other. The specialized sciences are cadres *within* the sphere of being, whereas philosophy and theology are *about* the sphere of being. By the sphere of being we mean the sphere of thought which is set by the saving activity of God.

This lack of continuity is to some extent softened by the fact that in the case of psychology we had to inquire whether it was a specialized science at all; and that in the case of historical scholarship we noticed that the historical categories fell short, and were limited to a cadre which lagged behind the methodological idea, which was related to the saving activity of God.

But apart from this – why should this difference in kind mean lack of continuity in secularization at all? The answer is that up to now secularization was ambivalent and that from now on it ceases to be so. This needs further explanation.

If ‘secularization’ means the stripping of the divine from the world this can be taken in a good sense; for the world is not divine. If, however, it means the conception of the world as ‘reality’ in the sense of a self-contained totality of effects this must be viewed unfavourably; for the world is creation and the object of the saving activity of God in creation, reconciliation and redemption.

In the specialized disciplines secularization was ambivalent – capable of both positive and negative interpretation. Secularization was of positive value in as far as the world’s own categories were



appropriated in a reliable cadre, and the world was thereby indeed stripped of the divine – that is to say, in this case, de-demonized. It was of negative value in so far as the presuppositions of the specialized sciences were interpreted as ‘reality’ which, as self-contained being, is demonic. The true presupposition of the specialized sciences is the sphere of being.

In philosophy and theology there is no room for this ambivalence; for philosophy and theology exist by reason of their interpretation of the presupposition. They are about the sphere of being. Revelation is the measuring rod of their truth. The sphere of being is not only their presupposition but also their theme. They are not limited to a cadre within the sphere of being; their limits are only human limitations in the understanding of revelation.

Consequently there is no room here for a favourable judgment of secularization. In philosophy and theology secularization is *per se* the stripping of the divine from God – namely the closing of the door to revelation. And the ambivalence of secularization disappears with a favourable evaluation of it. Only the negative verdict remains. Hence the lack of continuity of theme in the transition to philosophy and theology.

It will perhaps be more readily conceded that this is true of theology than of philosophy. Must philosophy in point of fact have to do with the saving activity of God? Is that really the test of its truth? We would underestimate philosophy and mistake its intention if we admitted this. Philosophy seeks universal, existentially determining, saving truth. It can only find this truth in the saving activity of God. The question whether and in what respect philosophy none the less differs from theology must be left on one side. Here we cannot do more than scratch the surface of this complex of questions.

Let us now turn to secularization in philosophy. This secularization prevails whenever the sphere of being is conceived of as having a different content from the one attributed to it by the divine revelation.

Secularization in philosophy sounds a sweeping phrase. We do not mean that philosophy as a whole is secularized. Even less are we suggesting that theology as a whole is secularized. The point of our discussion is to show that a non-secularized philosophy and theology is possible, and that means one which stands fast in the truth of the saving activity of God; nothing less will do. The Scriptures have something to say about this possibility. It is the possibility of being

in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is a human possibility not derived from men; and it is thus not a hard and fast matter of course. This warns us to be careful in our examination of secularization in certain philosophies. Our talk of philosophical secularization is itself not secure against secularization – on the contrary. In our striving for precision we must try to avoid making too many generalizations.

We shall confine ourselves to contemporary philosophy – at least as far as this is possible. For contemporary philosophy has its roots in the past, and although we shall try for a systematic understanding, this is not always possible without an understanding of the historical background.

Contemporary philosophy is marked by many differences. Superficially it is a patternless chaos. Yet when one looks for the tendencies and motifs which play an effective part in this variety a certain picture begins to emerge. Although it is completely impossible to divide up philosophy into pigeon-holes, each with its own motif, it is possible to pick out two separate and independent themes which provide the core around which concepts are formed. The first of these motifs belongs to neo-positivism, the second to existentialism.

We distinguish motifs, therefore, not systems. Yet we can only designate the motifs according to the systems in which they are dominant. The two we have mentioned do not sum up all the motifs which underlie contemporary philosophy; our survey is not a complete one. Those we have mentioned, however, may be considered to exert the most fascination and are thus, judging by their influence, the most important. But we must not confuse the influence of a motif with its truth. What is historically influential and thus to this extent important is not necessarily true.

Let us now consider therefore to what extent secularization is at work in the philosophical motifs we have mentioned (which incidentally must be particularized further), beginning with the first of them. This discussion will take up several chapters.

We have already designated this motif as the one which is the driving power of neo-positivism. Now a motif is something that *moves*, sets in motion; and neo-positivism is only one of the stages in this movement. It is the movement that began with positivism, proceeded through the acceptance and development of symbolic logic to logical positivism and from there led on to analytical philosophy. One curious feature is the disposition of the movement. Appealing most to the Anglo-Saxon mind, it begins with David Hume and

remains native to England and America. Its most characteristic and most radical period was, however, synonymous with the movement of thought associated with Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna group. Because of the Austrian political situation in the 1930s the members of the Vienna group were forced to emigrate, so that this movement too entered the Anglo-Saxon orbit. Of course there are other subsidiary tendencies. For example Auguste Comte must be reckoned among the founders of positivism, and symbolic logic received vigorous stimuli from both Poland and Germany.

What, then, is the dominating motif of positivism?

In order to do it justice we must have an eye for the positive contribution of positivism. This positive factor is in its turn determined by the negatives from which positivism dissociates itself: meaninglessness – empty speculation, the concept without content, the word without meaning, the semblance of knowledge which, though unverifiable, supports itself by endless discussions with empty words which have a merely emotional effect. This very emotional effect conceals the fact that the words are empty and preserves the illusion that something is known through them.

If it is from this that positivism dissociates itself, then it is obvious that the positive aim of its strivings is the thing that gives words content and meaning and turns knowledge into true knowledge. *And that is the sense impression.* Sense impressions form the only content of experience. Only sense impressions are data. The rest is fantasy. Sense impressions are positive. The negative (from which positivism dissociates itself) is everything that is non-verifiable, i.e. everything that is not derivable from sense impressions.

That is the motif of positivism. Do we understand it? If we understand it then we do not understand it, for this motif is something that is inexpressible. If we state it, we state nothing; we just produce sound – the sounds ‘only sense impressions exist’. And if we think that we understand this, then we do not understand, we have only sense impressions. Positivism contradicts its own presuppositions. It is therefore driven forward by the dialectic of the inner contradiction in its motif – driven from positivism to neo-positivism and from neo-positivism to analytical philosophy. Thus it can never appreciate its own motif. Consequently it is a labour of Sisyphus to reproduce it; if one understands it one cannot understand it.

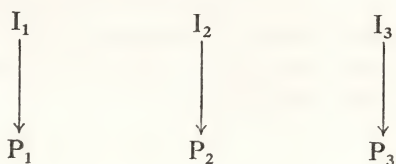
None the less, we will proceed with our account, attempting to forget this inner contradiction. We will submit our minds once more to the

influence of the motif. It sounds so plausible: impressions are the bricks out of which the content of the consciousness is built up. Knowledge which does not rest on valid data is fictitious knowledge. And the data are the impressions. We must dissociate ourselves from speech which does not rest on data and is thus not derived from sense impressions.

Knowledge and speech therefore are based on data; and the only data are sense impressions. But here we run into difficulties. What does 'are based on' mean? If we have understood the motif correctly, we ought to say: knowledge and speech are identical with sense impressions, they are not 'based on' them. If, however, there are only impressions and nothing else, and if knowledge and speech are therefore identical with impressions there is no possibility of false knowledge or untrue speech. For what on earth could false or fictitious knowledge be? False or fictitious impressions? But impressions are impressions; there is no distinction between true and false, appearance and reality. Words like 'true' and 'false', 'fictitious' and 'genuine' are then empty and belong to the negative concepts from which positivism dissociates itself.

'Based on' must therefore mean something different from 'identical with'. What then is knowledge and speech? A synthesis of impressions? But if that is so, then the impressions that are synthesized in knowledge and speech cannot themselves be a synthesis; they must be completely simple, elementary, not open to further analysis.

There we have it. The positive element in positivism consists of those sense-data which are not further analysable. For example: a sense-datum of this kind has a word as symbol, e.g. 'white'. Knowledge and speech also consist of elements. The basic epistemological unit is the 'having' of a sense-datum and the corresponding basic unit of language is the sentence describing this, e.g. 'I see white'. An elementary linguistic unit of this kind is called a protocol-statement. Knowledge really goes back to the registering or 'protocolling' of sense-data. And a scientific argument is a synthesis of such protocol-statements. Schematically this reads:



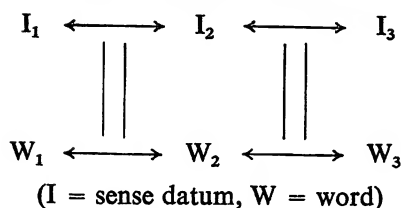
(I = sense-datum, P = protocol-statement)

Here again we find what we established earlier – that positivism is driven forward by the dialectic of the inner contradiction in its motif. This motif was that only sense-data are data. Now positivism is driven to the recognition that there are not only simple units; there are also syntheses of them. On the data level there are syntheses of sense-data and correspondingly on the level of symbols there are syntheses of protocol-statements. The synthesis is not a mere juxtaposition. In a scientific argument the elementary propositions are brought into a certain cohesion and new propositions may even be developed from the existing ones. It must now be asked, what is the positive content of this synthesis and on what is the synthesis based? The motif was, the positive content of our knowledge consists exclusively in the impressions and it is on the impressions that knowledge and speech are based. Thus no content is available for the synthesis and the synthesis is based on nothing. Since the subject of logic is the synthesis of elementary propositions, we can also say that logic has no content and is based on nothing. In other words, logic is tautological and is based on convention.

In order to be able to judge this evolution of positivism into neo-positivism we must form an idea of modern logic in as far as this is concerned with the synthesis of elementary propositions. This is what is known as propositional logic.

Before we proceed to this, however, we must consider a second line of development. Since the driving force of this development lies in the dialectic of the inner contradiction in the motif, it will not be a matter of surprise that this second line of development does not conform to the first.

The first line of development took up the problem of synthesis only at the protocol-statements, the elementary *propositions*. The second line takes up the problem of synthesis earlier, at the sense-data. These sense-data are, exist, together. Now words are symbols of sense-data. In knowledge and speech words are synthesized. Knowledge and speech will therefore be true if these words, i.e. these symbols of sense-data, are *put* together in the same way that the sense-data *are* together; if the words are *put* into the same order in which the data *are* ordered; if, in fact, the syntax of scientific language agrees with the syntax of the data. Schematically:



We can find this again in Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. In order to be able to form a judgment on it we should have to go into modern formal logic in detail. Unfortunately this second line of development is outside the compass of this book.



## 19 · Propositional Logic

The tendency of positivism to atomize data was further strengthened by the development of modern logic, symbolic logic. We have seen that according to the motif of positivism, the units given are sense-data and that the establishment of such a sense-datum is stated in an elementary proposition. Every sense-datum is thus represented by an elementary proposition.

Now it has been found possible to build up an exact science via the logical association of elementary propositions – a kind of propositional algebra. This is the case in propositional logic, which is a part of symbolic logic. One can reckon with elementary propositions. And what can be reckoned with must be taken into reckoning – it cannot be denied, it demonstrates its reality, it is impressive. Since one can reckon with elementary propositions, these are a real fact and so are the sense-data which they represent. The possibility of analysis into elementary propositions is demonstrated by the possibility of the synthesis of their representatives into complexes with which one can reckon. It is from our suggestibility to such arguments that positivism derives part of its power of conviction.

We have already pointed out that if all verifiable content is seen as lying in the sense-datum, no content remains for the logical association of the corresponding propositions, and that consequently logic is tautological and based on convention.

A certain minimum about the formation of logical concepts must be explained if all this is to be grasped and evaluated. We are here following the first chapter of D. Hilbert and W. Ackermann, *Grundzüge der theoretischen Logik*.<sup>1</sup> Because we are only concerned with the way of forming exact-logical concepts, we shall make some simplifications, restricting ourselves to, at most, three (instead of  $n$ )

<sup>1</sup> *Die Grundlehren der mathematischen Wissenschaften in Einzeldarstellungen*, vol. 27, 4th ed. 1959.

initial propositions; to negation, conjunction, disjunction and implication; and to a notation expressible in normal type. The writer is of course responsible for the result of this simplification and for the other alterations that have been made.

## FUNDAMENTALS

Definition: a proposition is a structure which is either true or false.

Let us suppose that three propositions are given. We shall call them X, Y and Z. For 'is true' we shall take the symbol 1, for 'is false' the symbol 0. (When used in this way the numbers 1 and 0 lose their arithmetical value.)

In propositional logic it is not the content of the propositions which is in question, but their property of being either true or false.

In normal language a proposition can be denied: 'not' (negation); and two propositions can be joined: 'and' (conjunction), 'or' (disjunction), 'if . . . then' (implication).

In logic we symbolize and define the negation and the connections as follows:

1. Negation. Symbol  $nX$ . Definition:  $nX$  is the proposition which is false if X is true and true if X is false. We can also say:  $nX$  is the proposition which in relation to X has 'reversed truth value'.

Schematically this definition reads:

If	X	then	$nX$ :
	1		0
	0		1

2. Conjunction. Symbol  $XaY$ . Definition:

If	X	and	Y	then	$XaY$ :
	1		1		1
	1		0		0
	0		1		0
	0		0		0

3. Disjunction. Symbol  $XY$ . Definition:

If	X	and	Y	then	$XY$ :
	1		1		1
	1		0		1
	0		1		1
	0		0		0

4. Implication. Symbol  $XiY$ . Definition:

If	X	and	Y	then	$XiY$ :
	1		1		1
	1		0		0
	0		1		1
	0		0		1

Notes on 1 to 4:  $nX$ ,  $XaY$ ,  $XY$ ,  $XiY$  (and also  $nY$ ,  $nZ$ ,  $XaZ$ , etc.) are propositions (structures which are either true or false). Their truth-value depends entirely on the truth-values of  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ . We say that they are truth-functions of the first propositions  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ .

Definition: a truth function of  $X$  and  $Y$  is a proposition whose truth-value depends entirely on the truth-values of  $X$  and  $Y$ . The truth-values of  $X$  and  $Y$  are the 'arguments' for the truth-functions of  $X$  and  $Y$ .

Note on 4:  $XiY$  is a logical approximation of ground and inference (which is something different from the relation between cause and effect) but does not achieve the same relation. E.g. 'if  $2 \times 2 = 5$ , then  $7:3 = 6$ ' is true according to the definition of  $XiY$ ; but it cannot be said that  $7:3 = 6$  is an inference from  $2 \times 2 = 5$ .

Since  $X$ ,  $Y$ ,  $nX$ ,  $XaY$ ,  $XY$ ,  $XiY$  (and also  $Z$ ,  $nY$ , etc.) are propositions, the defined operations (negation and connectives) can once more be applied to them. In order to avoid ambiguity the symbols which are introduced are put in brackets. For example  $n(XaY)$  is different from  $(nX)aY$ . The operation in brackets takes precedence over everything outside them.

The formations so arising are called 'logical expressions'. A logical expression is also a proposition, for it is either true or false.

## LOGICAL CALCULUS

We call two logical expressions 'equivalents' if they are the same truth-function, i.e. if they each have the same truth-value when either 1 or 0 is substituted for  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ .

The logically equivalent expressions may be substituted one for the other even when the one to be replaced is a constituent of a more complex logical expression.

Thus we have, among others, the following equivalences:

- (1)  $nnX$  equiv.  $X$   
     Proof:  
         If  $X$  then  $nX$  then  $nnX$ :  
             1           0           1  
             0           1           0
- (2)  $XaY$  equiv.  $YaX$   
 (3)  $Xa(YaZ)$  equiv.  $(XaY)aZ$   
 (4)  $XY$  equiv.  $YX$   
 (5)  $X(YZ)$  equiv.  $(XY)Z$   
 (6)  $X(YaZ)$  equiv.  $(XY)a(XZ)$

(First distributive law)

The logical equivalents (2) to (6) are strikingly analogous to the following algebraic equations:

$$\begin{array}{lll}
 (2) & a+b & = b+a \\
 (3') & a+(b+c) & = (a+b)+c \\
 (4') & ab & = ba \\
 (5') & a(bc) & = (ab)c \\
 (6') & a(b+c) & = ab+ac
 \end{array}$$

On the basis of these equations it is possible to effect all sorts of re-formations with algebraic forms. Analogously, in logic it is possible to effect re-formations with logical expressions, in other words to replace them by equivalents; one can reckon with them. In logic there are even equivalents which have no algebraic analogue, namely:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 (7) & Xa(YZ) \text{ equiv. } (XaY)(XaZ) \\
 & \text{(Second distributive law)}
 \end{array}$$

In algebra:  $a+bc$  are unequal to  $(a+b)(a+c)$ .

Since in algebra  $a+(b+c) = (a+b)+c$ , the brackets can be omitted:  $a+b+c$ . Or, since  $a(bc) = (ab)c$  one can write:  $abc$ .

The same is the case in logic. Conjunctions can be written without brackets:  $XaYaZ$ ; so can disjunctions:  $XYZ$ . In view of the analogy mentioned, a conjunction such as  $XaYaZ$  is also called a logical sum and  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  are its 'summands'; while a disjunction such as  $XYZ$  is a 'logical product',  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  being its 'factors'. In order to dispense with even more brackets, it is agreed that the negation binds most closely, then the disjunction, then the conjunction and finally the implication  $\rightarrow$ .

The more equivalents one has at one's disposal the more extensive are the possibilities of logical calculus. In the following we shall use the following additional equivalents. (The proof can always be carried out by setting out the truth-functions as in (1) above.)

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 (8) & XaX \text{ equiv. } X \\
 (9) & XX \text{ equiv. } X \\
 (10) & X(YaY) \text{ equiv. } X
 \end{array}$$

X	Y	YanY	X(YanY)
1	1	0	1
1	0	0	1
0	1	0	0
0	0	0	0

(11)             $n(XaY)$  equiv.  $nXnY$ 

X	Y	$n(XaY)$	$nXnY$
1	1	0	0
1	0	1	1
0	1	1	1
0	0	1	1

(12)             $n(XY)$  equiv.  $nXanY$   
(13)             $XiY$  equiv.  $nXY$ 

X	Y	$XiY$	$nXY$
1	1	1	1
1	0	0	0
0	1	1	1
0	0	1	1

We can now reckon logically, i.e. replace logical expressions by equivalents.

#### APPLICATIONS

A. It is possible to eliminate the implication from every logical expression by means of the equivalent

(13)             $XiY$  equiv.  $nXY$ .

After this elimination, the logical expression contains only negation, conjunction and disjunction.

B. Any logical expression can be written in so-called normal form by equivalent re-formation; there are two normal forms, the conjunctive and the disjunctive.

The conjunctive normal form is a conjunction of disjunctions, in which every factor of the disjunction is either a first proposition or its negation.

We shall omit the general proof, instead giving an example.

Let the 'given arbitrary logical expression' be:

$((XiY)a(nYinX))(n(XiY)an(nYinX))$	equiv. according to (13)
$(nXYannYnX)(n(nXY)an(nYnX))$	equiv. according to (12)
$(nXYannYnX)(nnXanYannnYannX)$	equiv. according to (1) and (4)
$YaX(nXYanXY)(XanYanYaX)$	equiv. according to (8) and (12)
$nXY(XanY)$	equiv. according to (6) and (4)
$XnXYanXYnY$	a conjunctive normal form

The disjunctive normal form is a disjunction of conjunctions, in which every component disjunct contains at least the conjunct of one propositional variable and its negation.

We shall omit the general proof, instead giving an example.

Let the 'given arbitrary logical expression' now be:

$n(XiY)n(nYinX)a(nYinX)(XiY)$	equiv. according to (13) and (1)
$n(nXY)n(YnX)aYnXnXY$	equiv. according to (4) and (9)
$n(nXY)anXY$	equiv. according to (12)
$n(nXYn(nXY))$	equiv. according to (12)
$n(nXY(XanY))$	equiv. according to (6) and (4)
$n(XnXYanXYnY)$	equiv. according to (11)
$n(XnXY)n(XYnY)$	equiv. according to (12) and (1)
$(n(XnX)anY)(Xan(YnY))$	equiv. according to (12), (1), and (2)
$(nXaXanY)(XaYanY)$	a disjunctive normal form

*N.B.* These normal forms are not unambiguous.

C. Any compound logical expression is a truth-function of its constituent propositions. Its truth-value is determined solely by the truth-values of its constituent propositions.

There are logical expressions which are always logically true, i.e. there are truth-functions which, in the case of any substitution of 1 or 0 for the truth-values of the first propositions, always give the truth-value 1.

disjunction  $XnXY$  is true if at least one of the factors is, and either  $X$  or  $nX$  is true.)

A logical expression is always true if and when in a conjunctive normal form of this expression in every disjunction at least one constituent proposition with its negation occur as factors. (For the disjunction  $XnXY$  is true if at least one of the factors is and either  $X$  or  $nX$  is true.)

Example: The logical expression given as the first example under B is always true.

There are logical expressions which are always false, i.e. there are truth-functions which in the case of any substitution of 1 or 0 for the truth-values of the constituent propositions always give the truth-value 0.

It is now possible to determine whether a logical expression is always false.

A logical expression is always false if and when, in a disjunctive normal form of this expression, in every conjunction at least one constituent proposition and its negation occur as terms. (For the conjunction  $XanXaY$  is false if at least one of the terms is false and either  $X$  or  $nX$  is false.)

Example: The logical expression given as the second example under B is always false.

D. It is possible to write down all the logical expressions which



can be formed from a finite number of constituent propositions. In this case two expressions will only be viewed as different if they are not equivalent (if this qualification is not added, the number of possible expressions is of course infinite).

We shall confine the exposition to the case of two constituent propositions,  $X$  and  $Y$ .

All the logical expressions which can be formed from  $X$  and  $Y$  can be arrived at by the following method.

We form the expression:

$$(X \text{ and } X) (Y \text{ and } Y)$$

convert it by means of multiplication into the conjunctive normal form:

$$XYaXnYanXYanXnY$$

and subtract from this conjunction all part conjunctions, i.e. the conjunctions that remain if one leaves out 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 terms (the improper part conjunction that remains if one leaves out all four terms we take as an expression which is always true and formulate it as  $XnX$ ).

The  $1 + 4 + 6 + 4 + 1 = 16$  part conjunctions which we thus arrive at are all the non-equivalent logical expressions which can be formed from  $X$  and  $Y$ .

Proof:

The 16 part conjunction are logical expressions which can be formed from  $X$  and  $Y$ .

They are mutually non-equivalent. Any two of them can be distinguished by the fact that at least one term occurs in one of them and not in the other. By an apt choice of truth-values for  $X$  and  $Y$  it can be contrived that this term receives the truth-value 0. Then the part conjunction in which this term occurs also receives the truth-value 0. The other three terms which occur in all part functions receive, through the same choice, the truth-value 1. Thus the other part functions also receive the truth-value 1. The two part functions are thus non-equivalent. (Example: Let the part functions be  $XYaXnY$ ;  $XYanXnY$ . The term  $XnY$  occurs in the first, not in the second. Let  $X$  be false,  $Y$  true. Then  $XnY$  is false,  $XY$ ,  $nXY$ ,  $nXnY$  and also  $XnX$  are all true; the first part function is false, the second true.)

Those are all the expressions. It is easy to see that there must be precisely 16 non-equivalent logical expressions in  $X$  and  $Y$ , no more and no less. A logical expression is a truth-function. The possible

truth-values of  $X$  and  $Y$  are: 11; 10; 01; 00; i.e. four possibilities. A truth-function is arrived at when 1 or 0 is taken four times in succession. There are  $2^4 = 16$  different combinations to choose from. Each of them is a truth-function.

E. On this basis all the possible conclusions can be deduced from a system of axioms.

We shall confine our demonstration to the case of two constituent propositions  $X$  and  $Y$  and two axioms derived from them, to which we shall assign the symbols  $P$  and  $Q$ . The aim is to find all the equivalent logical expressions whose truth follows from the truth of  $P$  viewed as an undivided whole and from  $Q$  viewed as an undivided whole. (For  $P$  and  $Q$  as undivided wholes to be true,  $X$  and  $Y$  need not always be true.)

A logical expression  $R$  (in  $X$  and  $Y$ ) will be a conclusion from the axioms  $P$  and  $Q$  if and when

$$P \supset Q \supset R$$

is a universally true expression (see also under C).

This, however, is only a method to determine whether a certain *given* expression  $R$  is a conclusion from the axioms.

In order to *deduce* all the possible conclusions we must proceed as follows:

The expression  $PaQ$  (an expression which is formed from  $X$  and  $Y$ ) is re-formed into the so-called full conjunctive normal form, that is the conjunctive normal form in which every conjunctive term is a product in two factors: one factor  $X$  or  $nX$ , the other factor  $Y$  or  $nY$ . A generally applicable method can be given for this. This full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$  is a part conjunction of the expression  $(X \vee nX)(Y \vee nY)$  (which was developed in accordance with the first distributive law), i.e. a part conjunction of the conjunction  $XYaXnYanXYanXnY$ . Now let us look at a term of this last conjunction which does not occur in the full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$ . By the apt substitution of 1 or 0 for  $X$  and  $Y$  this term can be transformed into a disjunction of two 0s and thus into one 0 (false proposition). On the other hand, through this *same* substitution the full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$  is transformed into a true proposition; for each of its terms is distinguished from this term (which does not occur in the full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$ ) by the fact that in at least one place  $X$ ,  $nX$ ,  $Y$  or  $nY$  is replaced by its opposite. This term (which does not occur in the full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$ ) can therefore be false while all the axioms are

true and is thus not a conclusion from the axioms. All logical expressions which represent conclusions from the axioms are thus contained as part conjunctions in the full conjunctive normal form of  $PaQ$ .

Hence: all possible conclusions from a system of two given axioms  $P$  and  $Q$  can be found if  $PaQ$  are developed to the full conjunctive normal form in  $X$  and  $Y$  and all part conjunctions are taken from this.

Example: Given are the axioms  $X$  and  $XiY$  (in this case therefore  $P$  is a first proposition:  $X$ , and  $Q$ :  $XiY$ ). We duly develop  $PaQ$ , that is  $Xa(XiY)$  into  $X$  and  $Y$ :  $Xa(XiY)$  equiv. according to (13)  $XanXY$  equiv. according to (10)  $X(YanY)anXY$  equiv. according to (6)  $XYaXnYanXY$ . That is the full conjunctive normal form. The possible conclusions of the axioms are its part conjunctions:

- |                                     |                            |                   |                   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. $XYaXnYanXY$                     | equiv. (8) $XYaXnYaXYanXY$ | equiv. (6)        |                   |
|                                     |                            |                   | $X(YanY)a(XanX)Y$ |
| 2. $XYaXnY$                         | equiv. (6) $X(YanY)$       | equiv. (10) $XaY$ |                   |
| 3. $XYanXY$                         | equiv. (6) $(XanX)Y$       | equiv. (10) $X$   |                   |
| 4.                                  |                            | equiv. (10) $Y$   |                   |
| 5.                                  |                            |                   | $XnYanXY$         |
| 6.                                  |                            |                   | $XY$              |
| 7.                                  |                            |                   | $XnY$             |
| 8. The universally true conclusion: |                            |                   | $nXY$             |
|                                     |                            |                   | $XnX$             |

## 20 · Formalization, Axiomatization, Conventionalization

We first devoted our attention to the motif that animates positivism, and then looked at symbolic logic in its simplest form, propositional logic. It will now be clear why propositional logic strengthens the positivist motif.

The motif was, to recognize as data only the elementary, non-analysable impressions. Knowledge, thought, being and reality are nothing more than a combination of elementary impressions of this kind. Everything else that is contained in knowledge and thought is contraband and defies verification. Every elementary impression can be established and expressed in an elementary proposition. The elementary propositions represent the elementary impressions and can be substituted for these as far as thinking is concerned, since in thought the qualitative content of the impressions is irrelevant. According to the basic motif of positivism, thought is the combining of elementary units; and it makes no difference whether these units are called impressions, propositions or symbols such as X, Y, etc.

Propositional logic then demonstrates that it is possible to build up an exact study using these propositions as elements. A proposition is a sentence which can be true or false. If particular connections between sentences are defined ('and', 'or', 'if . . . then') as well as the negation 'not', a large number of theorems can be derived by a process of exact argumentation. We have seen this. A kind of algebra is developed, just as exact as algebra, which works with numeric symbols. This propositional logic is of course in itself not open to criticism.

This is all very impressive. Take the last point: all possible conclusions can be deduced from a given system of axioms. When one hears that, especially if one has the conviction that every discipline can be axiomatized and that if this proves impossible that it must

disappear from the scientific stage (and this conviction is a dialectical child of the basic motif of positivism) then one is so deeply impressed that one projects the undeniable exactness of propositional logic back on to the basic motif of positivism. The (unconscious) train of thought runs more or less as follows: We have shown in propositional logic that all possible conclusions can be deduced from a given system of axioms (that is the answer at last!) – these axioms consist of elementary propositions – elementary propositions represent elementary impressions – everything is made up of elementary impressions – verification of a statement consists in the tracing of it back to elementary impressions (elementary impressions are the answer!) – the content of thought consists in the elementary impressions – thought is a combination of symbols of impressions without any further content.

In this way the possibility which propositional logic opens up strengthens the positivist motif. In addition, propositional logic shows a tendency to formalization, axiomatization and conventionalization. This tendency is now grafted on to the basic motif of positivism. In order properly to understand secularization in the light of this first motif, which stands in the foreground of contemporary philosophy, we must also examine this tendency.

First let us look at *formalization*. We noticed this earlier. Formalization in logic consists in the fact that logic is only concerned with the form of the argumentation, not with its content. In propositional logic the logical units are the elementary propositions. Because their content – *what* is expressed in these propositions – is irrelevant, we can designate such a proposition by a symbol, e.g. X. On the other hand it is of relevance that a proposition with different content is a different proposition, which must then be designated by another symbol, e.g. Y; and further that a proposition can be true or false. Another proposition *is* another precisely by reason of the fact that it can be true or false independently of the first. But the formalization goes further. Since the content of the proposition is irrelevant, the meaning of the words ‘true’ and ‘false’ is also irrelevant. The only thing that is now of importance is that a proposition must be either one or the other. Consequently ‘true’ and ‘false’ can also be represented by symbols. We took 1 as the symbol for true and 0 for false, but we might equally well have reversed them, or have taken quite other symbols. We have now reached the point when the meaning of the words ‘proposition’, ‘true’ and ‘false’, in as far as they play a part

in propositional logic, is reduced to  $X$ , which must be either 1 or 0, and  $Y$ , which must be either 1 or 0. Instead of these words and symbols others could be chosen as long as confusion is avoided and words and symbols are not changed in the course of a thought progression where they represent the same things throughout. The point here is the statement of equally permanent 'somethings' of group one, each of which must be one of the two 'somethings' of group two.

With this, however, formalization is not yet complete. The possibility of logical calculus only arises with the definition of negation and of the connections between propositions. Now these connections are also so far formalized that their meaning is not identical with the 'content' meaning of the words 'and', 'or', 'if . . . then', etc., but are fixed by definition, as an agreement with respect to the association of 1 or 0 with the connections in every combination of 1 or 0 with the connected  $X$  and  $Y$ .

The complete formalization of propositional logic is now achieved, in that nothing is used in the logical structure except what is relevant to that structure. The structure itself has been briefly outlined. In order to achieve complete formalization we can do two things. We can either leave everything as it was, but in the interpretation of the words used exclude everything that does not play a part in the propositional logic. That is to say, when using 'true' or 'false' we can think only of two mutually exclusive examples of a group consisting of these two examples, and in the case of 'proposition' think only of one example of another group which consists of an undetermined number of examples, which does not include the first-named group, and which has one of the two examples of the first-named group added to each example of its own. Or, in order to avoid this break-neck procedure, we can cease to use the words 'proposition', 'true' and 'false' and replace them by symbols (e.g.  $X, Y, \dots : 1, 0$ ), which must, however, first be defined.

The formalization of a theory, in this case the theory of propositional logic, therefore means: to absorb into the construction of this theory only that which is directly relevant to that construction. Formalization is therefore not the same as expressing in formulae. In formalized logic, formulae are certainly employed; but formalized theories which employ no formulae whatever are perfectly conceivable. Moreover a formalized theory, although it certainly allows the use of formulae, can none the less never be entirely expressed in them. The meaning of a formula must be determined within the



theory; and the meaning of one formula cannot be determined by another; that is only possible by the use of a different language from that of the formulae.

We now come, secondly, to *axiomatization*.

In formalized propositional logic the symbols, as we saw, still retain a particular meaning, whether one uses verbal symbols such as 'true', 'false', 'proposition', or others such as 1, 0, X and Y. Moreover, new non-formalized concepts must be introduced, such as function (we may think of the definition of truth-function), equivalent, etc. With the retained and the newly-formed meanings one now proceeds to deduce, to prove, to understand, etc. Deducing, proving, understanding, etc. have the aim of making true statements and avoiding false ones. In the process one relies on naive, non-reflective evidence. Thus a curious contrast arises between the propositions of propositional logic itself and the propositions with which propositional logic is dealing. At the same time there is a correspondingly curious contrast between the truth or falsity of the propositional logic itself and the truth and falsity of the propositions with which it is dealing. Its own propositions, its own truth, are naive, non-formalized, whereas those with which it deals are reflective, formalized.

This naivety, which relies on non-reflective evidence of truth, is not enough. A new logic must come into being which will take as its object the reinvestigation of the process of thought in propositional logic. Such a second order logic, which has a first order logic as its subject of investigation, is called metalogic.

In this metalogic, the naivety of propositional logic disappears and with it also the significance which symbols still retained in that logical system. The naive reliance on the evidences which were implicit in these significances is now replaced by rules according to which X, Y, a, i, etc., are manipulated in propositional logic. X, Y, a, i, etc., can really no longer be called symbols, for they no longer stand for anything. They are figures which are expressed by certain sounds. The rules mentioned are called axioms. It could therefore be said that the formalization of propositional logic is only complete with its axiomatization.

Axiomatization therefore consists in the setting up of rules for the manipulation with figures.

The axiomatization of an already existing logic, in this case propositional logic, is not unambiguous. There are several axiom systems which result in the same figure combinations.

We now come, thirdly, to *conventionalization*.

It must be noted that here we must distinguish between the truth of the propositions *with which* propositional logic is dealing and the truth of this propositional logic itself. The first kind of truth is formalized to an example of a group which consists of two examples; the second kind of truth was, in axiomatization, made dependent on the manipulation with figures, according to the axioms.

It is the latter type of truth (the truth of propositional logic itself) which is interpreted as convention.

The inducement, or subornation, to this lies in the possibility of axiomatization.

We have seen that the propositional logic in question can be axiomatized. The axioms are the rules according to which the figures must be manipulated in order to obtain the formulae of propositional logic. There are several axiom systems which lead to the same formulae as that of the propositional logic in question.

But not every axiom system leads to the same formulae. Some lead to others. And if the figures which occur in these other formulae are now interpreted back into propositions, then one has a different propositional logic from the one under consideration.

Which propositional logic is now true? Or is it pointless to put this question at all? Is the position perhaps as follows: one axiom system produces one 'true' logic, the other system another 'true' logic, so that it is a matter of arbitrary choice, of convention, which one takes?

Incidentally we might have arrived at the idea that more than one 'propositional logic' is possible earlier, before we touched on axiomatization but were still dealing with formalization. For we built up propositional logic on the basis of X, which can be 1 or 0, of Y, which can be 1 or 0, etc. It is obvious that it is possible to take as a basis X, which can be 1 or  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 0, Y, which can be 1 or  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 0, etc. (we know that 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 0 are here used only as symbols or figures, not as numbers); and then on this new basis build up as before. In this way a logic is achieved in which a proposition is true, false, or some third possibility (perhaps indifferent), a so-called three-value logic. A three-value, or a more than two-value, logic in general does not recognize the *principium exclusi tertii*.

## 21 · Concentration and Limitation

Formalization, axiomatization, conventionalization – in all this there is an increasing concentration and radicalization. The climax is not reached with conventionalization; it is one step beyond: in mechanization.

We said that the axiomatization of a certain propositional logic consisted in the fact that the rules are given according to which the figures must be *manipulated*. Now it is quite normal to let a machine carry out manipulations according to fixed rules, although the expression ‘carry out’ is not really correct. It would be better to say that the suitably constructed machine is fed certain material in a suitable way and brings about alterations in this material which correspond to the alterations which we bring about by means of manipulation according to the rules we have named. In this sense it is therefore quite normal for us to leave certain processes which can be carried out automatically, and thus mechanically, to a machine – hence automation in factories.

Consequently it is obviously possible to produce by machine the result of manipulation according to fixed rules. This means: *in as far as* logic consists of a propositional logic that can be axiomatized, it is possible to produce by machine the figure combinations in which the conclusion is formalized from certain premises. That again means: *in as far as* thought consists of operations which can be formalized and axiomatized in accordance with propositional logic, it is possible to carry out an analogous mechanical operation by machine and subsequently to read off the result from that machine.

There is nothing unusual about this. Pascal had already constructed a calculating machine which was at that time something as astonishing as the intellectual achievements of the flying-saucer inhabitants of contemporary fantasy. Nowadays every business has a calculating

machine – in this case only a system of wheels, handles and rods. It makes no basic difference if the apparatus is expanded by the introduction of electronic instruments. The word ‘electronic’ today has something of the aura of the flying saucer. But the basic possibilities of an electronic instrument are no different from those of a crudely mechanical one. Practically they are greater, however, since everything works much more quickly electronically than mechanically – about a thousand million times quicker, as is the case, for example, in modern computers.

We have in fact a progressive radicalization: formalization, axiomatization, conventionalization, mechanization. But a certain type of overheated fantasy of the flying-saucer kind is not content with this. It goes further and visualizes, on the far horizon, a thinking machine, by which it means a machine capable of thought and cognition. This fantasy has no eye for the ‘in as far as’ and thus falls into the error of trespass beyond the proper categorial limits. The structure of human thought and cognition is essentially different from the structure of a more or less electronic machine – different in the sense that the structure of thought includes the structure of the machine but not *vice versa*.

Consequently we must pause to consider. This is not a criticism of propositional logic with its formalization, axiomatization, conventionalization and mechanization. All that is an exact science, a fact. What has to be considered is: firstly, we must take into account how little of thought and cognition is absorbed into propositional logic (not quantitatively but qualitatively, structurally little); and secondly, we must remember that amalgamation with propositional logic is not sufficient to turn the nonsense of the main positivist motif into sense.

Here, keeping to propositional logic makes no essential difference. Our reflections apply to the whole of logistics as well as to the parasitic growth of the positivist motif on logistics.

How thin propositional logic really is! A multi-example group  $X$ ,  $Y$ ,  $Z$ , . . . , each example of which must be assigned to one example of a two-example group, 1, 0 – and then some applications of the theory of permutations and combinations, long since familiar from algebra. And that is supposed to sum up the structure of cognition and thought!

For the rest, it is clear from the formalization, axiomatization and conventionalization itself that the structure of thought and cognition

cannot be reduced to that to which propositional logic formalizes, axiomatizes and conventionalizes it.

We saw that the axioms are the rules according to which the game of manipulation with the figures to which the first propositions are formalized is played. These axioms are thus conventional, arbitrary; one could choose differently and would then normally arrive at a different logic. Because they are conventional it cannot be said whether they are true or false, right or wrong; it seems as if the whole concept of truth has evaporated. Positivist secularization now consists in the following more or less conscious argument: if the truth concept appears to play no part in the process of concentration, then this truth concept was only emotional and not indicative, even in the naivety of non-reflective cognition and thought.

If one argues in this fashion something is being forgotten which also belongs to propositional logic.

The position is as before: the axioms as rules for the manipulation with figures are arbitrarily chosen. But if I conjure up a number of arbitrary sounds, these are not rules for a possible game. The sentences must not only have an individual meaning; they must have a relation to one another, etc. Propositional logic, or really its meta-logic, also demands the working out of the conditions which an axiom system must fulfil so that a logical game can be played according to these axioms or rules. We can choose the axioms as we like, that fact remains unaffected; but we have no influence on the results which spring from a certain choice – that is, whether a logic will emerge. We have no influence: that is to say, we remain bound, not in our choice, but in the logical results of that choice. Bound to what? To the truth of the matter.

The conditions which an axiom system must fulfil if a logical game is to be possible according to these axioms or rules are: freedom from contradictoriness, independence and completeness.

An axiom system is *non-contradictory* if it is impossible to deduce from it two propositions with opposite truth-values:  $P$  and  $nP$ . (In the two-value propositional logic which we discussed it can be shown that if  $P$  and  $nP$  are both deducible, then every proposition and its negation are deducible; then the game becomes meaningless.)

An axiom system is *independent* if no one of the axioms is deducible from the other, thus becoming superfluous. Independence is hence not a *sine qua non*; it is rather a matter of elegance. Elegance is also one aspect of truth, however.

An axiom system is *complete* if, through the addition of a new axiom not deducible from the others, a contradictory axiom system is invariably formed.

Propositional logic involves not only the working out of these conditions (as a component part of its metalogic) but also the proof that a certain axiom system fulfils them.

A proof must be true; if a mistake is made in it, it is untrue. It is again evident that truth is not denied by the free choice of axioms; it is in fact confirmed as the sole medium within which this freedom is possible.

We really knew that from the beginning. For we distinguished between the propositions which are the subject of propositional logic and which are formalized to examples of a group:  $X, Y, \dots$ , and the propositions in which propositional logic itself is expressed in naive participation in the truth. In the relevant metalogic, the latter propositions are again axiomatized and thus formalized; then, however, the naivety of the participation is transferred to the propositions in which the metalogic itself is expressed.

It looks as if the retreat from naive propositions via propositional logic and metalogic to meta-metalogic has something of the deplorable 'burnt-earth' policy; in the wake of the retreat truth is left desolate.

A second step in our consideration is whether this is all inevitably true (sic!). Our intention is not to withdraw anything that has already been said. That was exact science. In fact no-one compels us in the building up of propositional logic to take account of its applicability to other scientific thought. If we none the less wish to take this into account we cannot free ourselves from material truth as the test for the formalized propositions with which propositional logic is dealing.

The clearest example of this is the material truth of causality as the test for the meaning of  $nXY$ . Again, no-one forces us to give  $nXY$  any other meaning than the one which we have ourselves axiomatically given to it: figures in certain combinations, permitted by the axioms and called formulae; and defined as truth function according to the scheme:

X	Y	$nXY$
1	1	1
1	0	0
0	1	1
0	0	1



and according to the agreement on symbols also expressible as  $XiY$ ; or in words as 'if X then Y'. If, however, propositional logic is viewed as applicable to physics then  $nXY$  must express (mathematico-physical) causality. It then immediately appears that  $nXY$  is an extremely incomplete and moreover distorted expression for causality.

It is a distorted expression. If, for example, both X and Y are false, then  $nXY$  is true. According to propositional logic a correct statement would then be: if hydrogen has the atomic number 8, then there will be an eclipse of the moon every day. But according to physics this statement is nonsense. If the case holds, a nonsensical physical proposition must correspond to a nonsensical logical one. But here the matter is distorted.

Apart from that,  $nXY$  is a highly inadequate expression for causality. That is clear when we remind ourselves what the causality that  $nXY$  should express really is. Causality is that regularity in organic-physical events which physical theory *attempts* to express. Causality therefore applies to the object of physics, not to its subject. Kant thought that the riddle of the possibility of physical knowledge could be solved by ascribing causality (like the other categories) to the subject. According to Kant, the subject, the knowing person, finds himself confronted only with the material of sensation, which he orders by means of the categories (among them causality) which belong to the equipment of his own understanding. By means of this equipment, Kant believes, complete, clear and intelligible knowledge is possible. The facts, however, do not bear him out. Any time that physical knowledge makes an advance it is shown that the regularity which it looks for and in part finds is an objective regularity, objective in the sense of belonging to the object. At the same time it is evident that the more our knowledge of causes increases, the less we are able to explain what causality really is. Even the concrete, physical theory is only an incomplete expression of causality, and there is no reason to suppose that the formalization into 'if . . . so' and further into  $nXY$  preserves in this incomplete expression the real essentials; or that the content of the physical knowledge from which the abstract theory is built up contributes nothing as regards causality.

We now have a more or less general view of the matter. Propositional logic is like any other science, a reduction within the extensionality of what is presupposed. That is in itself perfectly legitimate, provided that it is not forgotten that it does rest on reduction, even on a series of reductions, and that the particular conceptuality which

remains after this reduction is not held to be the one possible and universal conceptuality.

The extensionality to which this reduction is applied is being in its truth, that is, in its utterance. The fact that we limit ourselves to this utterance (logicity), and thus to material truth, is already a reduction. This material truth is the objective conceptuality. Knowledge is participation in this objective truth, which has the character of utterance. That does not mean that this objective truth (conceptuality, utterance) is given to us as a collection of individual propositions. We can see the mode of givenness of conceptual truth in the separate act of cognition. It is not a static datum separate from the cognitive act; it is effected through the fact that in the cognitive act a potential utterance is actualized, and then indeed in individual propositions. The (subjective) truth of these propositions lies in their participation in objective truth. Objective truth is given as utterance which is actualized in the cognitive act, in the form of potential utterableness. That this actualization is effected in the subjective act does not alter the fact that the utterance towards which the subjective act aims is objective.

A further aspect of the phenomenon of knowledge is that the coherent whole of actualized propositions is true in as far as it participated in the coherent whole of material truth; and that at the same time the splitting up into individual propositional coherences is none the less an expression (though only a very incomplete one) of the articulation of material truth.

Propositional logic now continues with its reduction. The coherence of propositions whose logical meaning is participation in the coherence of factual truth is on the contrary reduced to conjunction, disjunction, implication and negation. A further reduction is that the concepts 'proposition' and 'truth' are formalized. In this way exact calculability is achieved but at the cost of leaving very little of the participation in the original material truth.

While, therefore, propositional logic is a quite legitimate reduction of what is presupposed, positivism is a false interpretation of these presuppositions.

The presupposition of positivism (in as far as this is deducible from its basic motif) is that everything is put together from sense impressions, these being the elements of data. Now there is an inner contradiction in saying that the basic presupposition is a complex of sense impressions. Sense impressions cannot be a basic presupposi-

tion because they themselves contain an endless number of presuppositions of much more involved structure. Sense impressions presuppose people who live in the world and can acquire these impressions through their sensory organs, who are capable of speech, thought and perception. It is nonsense to reverse the matter.

## 22 · Secularization in Philosophy: Second Motif

We are engaged in an investigation of how far contemporary philosophy is secularized. We have seen that it is characterized by two motifs, one to be found in neo-positivism and the other in existentialism. Now it is not that these motifs are in themselves part of a process of secularization; we must reserve this point for further examination. We have examined the motif of neo-positivism; let us now turn to that of existentialism.

The motif of existentialism is *a striving to understand existence*.

First let us try to elucidate this motif phenomenologically. In this process we must take concepts in the form in which they present themselves in the field of the existentialist motif. This proviso is important here (in contrast to the first motif) because we are dealing with the comprehension of existence. In a phenomenological discussion existence, being, must remain in a state of suspension and we cannot fall back on the knowledge that being, and hence existence, lies within the saving activity of God.

The field of the motif is one of tension; existence is not a matter of course, and existence and understanding stand in a relationship of tension to one another. Not only that: existence itself is a tense duality.

Existence (the understanding of which is the aim of existentialism) is in the first place immediate being, being as act of being, *esse* as *existentia*. As such it is contrasted with potential being, being as possibility, timeless ideality. *Ex-sisten-tia* is being emerging and entering into time.

Existence is also the being of man. The being of man, too, is immediate being. But is the converse also true? Is immediate being *per se* the being of man? Or is the being of man one type of immediate being? Or – does the first approach to a general immediacy

of being collapse under the weight of human realization of it – without our being able to escape the duality of human and other (?) being?

It is precisely this non-realizable and yet non-escapable duality of existence which – in association with the other duality of being and understanding – goads existentialism forwards: in Karl Jaspers as the confrontation of transcendence and existence; in Jean Paul Sartre as the contrast between *être en soi* and *être pour soi*; in Martin Heidegger as the nightmare of silence in the face of the urgent question of whether the search for the meaning of being can remain content to interrogate the being of existence.

If we talk about existentialism we must be alive to this. Existence is not – and cannot be – a self-satiated human existence. Human existence cannot be plumbed except by understanding of being; being can only be plumbed as the being which makes human existence possible. Existentialism does not aim to be, and cannot be, fundamental anthropology; it is fundamental ontology. But fundamental ontology is only possible as theology. In as far as existentialism resists this fact, it is lacking in real objectivity. That is, in fact, its form of secularization. This secularization is not, however, intrinsic to its motif. With our last remarks we have got ahead of ourselves; we must now return to the phenomenological balance (in as far as it can be preserved) as regards the other duality of existence and understanding.

When we remember that the origin of existentialism in the thinking of Kierkegaard contrasts with Hegel's undivided interpretation of being, it becomes clear that here too the relationship is one of tension. In Hegel, being is the dialectically developing concept. How much one chooses, in thinking, to stress the contrast, and how much one decides to soften it is a matter of taste; in any case there is no contrast between thinking and being; they are identical. In Hegel, thinking is dialectical and (because the two are identical) so is being. But the relationship of thinking and being is not a dialectical one. It only becomes so with Kierkegaard, and afterwards in existentialism; being and thinking, existence and understanding pull apart without being able to exist or understand in isolation from one another; existence demands understanding and understanding is understanding of being. Thus the same bond in separation applies here as between general being and the being of man.

Observations of this kind, however, are dangerously prone to remain merely theoretical and disengaged, thus missing the real

point: the revealing decision for existential truth which is not limited to theory but (as the act of existing) embraces the whole of existence. The situation in which the motif of existentialism acts has changed since Kierkegaard. The all-mediating understanding, over against which Kierkegaard set the decision of faith, was after all being happening in the identity of the (dialectical) real and the (dialectical) reasonable, a spiritual happening which embraced morality, art and even religion in its historical totality. The 'understanding' in the desert of which contemporary existentialism proclaims its motif of the understanding of existence, is mere observation, forgetful of being; one can only wonder where it gets the vitality to uphold its meaninglessness. This postulates for existentialism a multiple confrontation:

- the established object, empty of meaning, against being;
- the merely-observing, against existence;
- the alienation of the object, against the understanding in which existence has its being.

Existentialism, the motif of which we have tried to illuminate, has achieved something important. It has broken the domination of the *ontological* subject-object structure.

The *epistemological* subject-object structure is true. Subject and object must be differentiated in the cognitive act. But a confusion which involves serious consequences arises when this distinction between subject and object is ontically fixed; and we have been living under the domination of this since Descartes. He determines the human subject as the self-contained inner world of the *cogito*: subject = *res cogitans*. And that again is the same as the consciousness. Man is metaphysically imprisoned in his own consciousness. The subject – now metaphysically determined – has direct knowledge only of his own content. The subject is given only to itself, and is divided from all objects by a metaphysical gulf. The great problem is now how knowledge of objects is possible, since the metaphysical gulf would then have to be bridged. We can only speak of an object and thus of a subject as long as this problem remains a live one within the ontologization of the subject.

For positivism this problem is no longer live. Here object and hence also subject ceases to exist (for if there is no object then there is no subject), while the consciousness as datum remains, as a conglomeration of elementary impressions. Positivism exists inside a degenerate Cartesian *cogitatio*. If in spite of this the words subject



and object are used, grotesque misunderstandings arise. It is small wonder that in publications about the 'subjective' character of contemporary physics the microscope functions as subject.

The domination of this ontically fixed subject-object scheme is broken in the development of the existentialist motif. Existentialism knows that being cannot be reduced to 'presence-at-hand', in Heidegger's phrase, nor human existence to an onlooker's existence, nor the subject to introspective presence-at-hand. It is willing to take into account the conceptuality which is presupposed in human existence. The fact that this conceptuality is not measurable in natural categories was already grasped in the philosophy that called itself personalistic; personalism also made a start with the elucidation of the personal categories. Existentialism is freer in this respect, however, because it is readier for new concept-formation adapted to the phenomenon. At least as far as its motif goes, it is alive to the presuppositions of human existence, and to its silent protest against the charlatanism of much pseudo-scholarship. Its approach opens the way to true understanding.

The motif of existentialism is thus not a specimen of secularization; it does not even contain its seed. Secularization has certainly crept in incidentally in the working out of the motif – as when it is denied that human existence is existence in confrontation with God and of such a kind that God's revelation is constitutive. Not existentialism itself, but some existentialist philosophers have more or less explicitly denied this and have turned human existence into a complete and self-contained independency. This results in a paradoxical situation; for it is precisely existentialism that is, by reason of its motif, alive to the dependence of human existence. If existence is now after all conceived in terms of independence, that dependence is absorbed into this independence (as 'thrownness', as *'pour soi'*, which needs nothingness). Existentialism by reason of its motif is also alive to the incompleteness of human existence. If this existence is now conceived of in terms of completeness, this completeness must absorb that incompleteness (as 'Being-towards-death', as the self-torment of mutual objectification). These harshnesses are seared by the absence of the true existential categories, which do not allow themselves to be secularized because they have their life in the divine revelation: love, grace, sin, faith, hope, joy. Consequently, although it is existentialism above all which has performed a great service in the overcoming of the substantial 'enclosedness' of existence as Cartesian

subject, in its incidental secularization it has arrived at a new Cartesian enclosedness – no longer of a substantial but now of a functional kind, which again excludes the true categories; but which perhaps has the merit of being conscious, and remaining conscious, of its inadequacies.

This secularization is, however, unnecessary. The existentialist motif contains the possibility of true development. And we must touch briefly on this positive possibility.

First, God's revelation, which constitutes human existence, is the concrete, unique, in the true sense historical revelation. (Revelation as the act of God makes the distinction between 'historicity' and 'historicality' irrelevant.) It is the revelation in Jesus Christ, which is identical with the revelation in the work of salvation from creation to consummation. The true categories, of which we have spoken, are general in as far as they apply to all men, specialized in as far as they have their origin in the concrete revelation. Between this speciality and this generality there is harmony, a harmony which philosophical and theological thought down to the present day finds it difficult to grasp because it tends towards the antithetical relationship of a quite different speciality and generality. It would be wrong, however, to pin philosophy down to an autonomous-judicious generality and theology to a heteronomous speciality.

Secondly, the true development of the existentialist motif does not result in existentialist philosophy if that is interpreted as knowledge of a sphere which can be isolated in principle; nor does it issue in existentialism if that is taken to mean the method of thought which derives all knowableness from human existence. The true development of the existential motif results in, and from the beginning moves in, the sphere of being, which is the saving activity of God. This development seeks and presupposes all-embracing, existentially determining, saving truth and is thus philosophy; it seeks this truth where alone it is to be found, and hence is also theology.

## 23 · Secularization in Theology: *Saeculum*

What is secularization in theology? It is not one kind of secularization among many; here we have secularization in the place where, if anywhere, it will find its appropriate definition. But first it is necessary for us to ask once more what the Bible means by secularization. We made the first approach in chapter 1, in connection with the word *saeculum* in the Vulgate. The Greek word that is rendered by *saeculum* is *aiōn*. This is generally translated as 'world', sometimes as 'time', occasionally as 'eternity'. None of these words is adequate. *Aiōn* is a qualified era – qualified by its relation to the Kingdom of God – and then becomes the human world in this era, within this qualification. The qualification is generally negative, but need not be so. In *aiōn-saeculum*, therefore, the determination of time is in the foreground – but it is the determination of time as seen from the point of view of eternity. That is important for our later discussion. 'World' is not the ideal translation of *aiōn-saeculum*, if only because 'world' in the New Testament is generally (and in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles exclusively) *kosmos* – *mundus*. *Kosmos* is not the same as *aiōn*. In *kosmos*, time is not determined. *Kosmos* is neutral towards the Kingdom of God. The particularity of God's saving concern is a synthetic predicate for *kosmos* and an analytical one for *aiōn-saeculum*. Referring to the *kosmos*, the Bible can therefore speak of God loving the world, of the ruler of the world, and also, neutrally, of 'your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world'.

So much for the meaning of *saeculum*. What the Bible now means by secularization is shown by Rom. 12.2: *mē sychēmatizesthe tōi aiōni toutōi* – *nolite conformari huic saeculo* – do not be conformed to this world. The context will also be of importance for our discussion, as well as the continuation: But be transformed by the renewal of your mind. The Pauline admonition not to be secularized

is at least applicable to thinking too. Here we are not only warned about secularization in general, but especially about secularization in theology. A further passage is of importance. It begins with Rom. 11.36: *hoti ex autou kai di' autou kai eis auton ta panta*. In this at least, as analytical predicate, the determinateness is expressed to which *ta panta* and hence *ho aiōn houtos* are subordinated. The neglect of this qualification of our *aiōn* is secularization. The *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* is thus a negative; the neglect of the fact that *ta panta* are *ex autou kai di' autou kai eis auton*. That is neglect of salvation. For *aiōn* is primarily era, i.e. a qualified section of time, and the chimes that mark these temporal divisions are creation, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, the gift of the Spirit, the second coming. The *aiōn houtos* is therefore quite concretely the era between the pouring out of the Spirit and the second coming of Christ. Our time is qualified by this position in the history of salvation. And this qualification is not of merely subsidiary importance, it is essential. The true *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* is therefore this coming from Whitsun and moving towards consummation. Where the New Testament speaks of the end of the world, the word used is always *aiōn*, not *kosmos*, e.g. Matt. 28.20: *kai idou egō meth' hymōn eimi pāsas tas hēmeras heōs tēs synteleiās tou aiōnos*.

This *syntelesia tou aiōnos* is Christ's coming again, e.g. Matt. 24.3: *ti to sēmeion tēs sēs parousiās kai synteleiās tou aiōnos?*

If further confirmation is needed of the fact that *aiōn* is a temporal determination, this is given in I Tim. 6.17 and II Tim. 4.10, where the writer speaks of *ho nyn aiōn*.

When, however, Paul says: *mē syschēmatizesthe tōi aiōni toutōi* he means by the *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* not this true being, but the phantom that arises if the determination of time by its place in salvation is forgotten. Then time, and the world of men within time, strives to be independent and to build up a form of its own. What is this form? Luke 16.8 gives the answer in the parable of the unjust steward: *hoi hyioi tou aiōnos toutou phronimōteroi hyper tous hyious tou phōtos eis tēn genean tēn heautōn* (the children of this world act in their own generation with far more reflection than the children of light). *Hoi hyioi tou aiōnos toutou* are contrasted with the *hyioi tou phōtos*. Apparently that is the *schēma tou aiōnos toutou*, simply darkness in contrast to light. But darkness is not anything positive; it is only the absence of light. That is now precisely the *schēma*: the children of this era try in vain to find a form for themselves, to build up an existence

of their own. They achieve only a phantom; they are *phrontimoi*, but not *sophoi*. It is worthy of note, moreover, with what respect Jesus speaks of this well-considered plan. The New Testament never speaks slightly of civilization.

The *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* is therefore a phantom. Uselessness and frustration are in the forefront. All the characteristics of this *schēma* are negative: care, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust for everything else, e.g. Mark 4.19: *hai merimnai tou aiōnos kai hē apatē tou ploutou kai hai peri ta loipa epithymiai eis poreuomenoi sympnigousin ton logon*.

*Hai merimnai tou aiōnos*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger looks for the being of existence. First he says that it is being-in-the-world; then he digs deeper and finds the real being-in-the-world to be *care*; he digs deeper still and finds the real characteristic of care in *temporality*. 'The concern of circumspective common sense is grounded in temporality – indeed in the mode of a making-present which retains and awaits.'<sup>1</sup> Care is *merimna tou aiōnos*. Care has its own time; that, however, is merely a phantom; true time is the time set by salvation. The time of care is worldly time, *ho aiōn tou kosmou*. Eph. 2.2: *en hais (hamartiais) pote periepatēsate kata ton aiōna tou kosmou toutou* (according to the course of this world), *kata ton archonta tēs exousias tou aeros, tou pneumatou tou nyn energountos en tois hyiois tēs apeitheias*.

Now that we have sufficiently considered the remarkable expression *ho aiōn tou kosmou toutou*, the course or time of this world, it is noticeable that this *aiōn*, this *saeculum*, is here parallel to the 'prince of the power of the air' and 'the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience'. After what has gone before, this brings us up short. Has the negative care and deceitfulness of riches now turned into disobedience? Is that not a new designation? Has the apostle now taken up a pessimistic attitude to civilization? Does the *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* all at once take on a much darker, indeed a demonic colouring? Up to now it seemed to be only a form of emptiness and meaninglessness; is it now a form of disobedience? Has the dark shadow of judgment now fallen over the relatively innocent activity of this era? And what consequences must that have for our evaluation of secularization in theology? Is this secularization also *apeitheia*? Shall we dare to say this? And where does this secularization occur?

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ET by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (SCM Press, 1962), §79, p. 458.

These last questions remain open. But there can be no question of the demonic character of *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* being a new designation. In all the passages that we have discussed, the *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* was not otherwise designated than as neglect of salvation. The activities of the present age cannot therefore be judged on their own merits, with the Kingdom in the abstract; there are not two kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God, each with its own principles, each with its immanent positivity. There is no equilibrium between an earthly *aiōn houtos* and a parallel heavenly *aiōn*, between the course of this world and the course of salvation. The neglect of salvation is *apeitheia*, is demonic. The *schēma tou aiōnos toutou* is the rejection of the time of salvation: of the *kairos euprosdektos*, of the *hēmera sōtēriās* (II Cor. 6.2.). And that is *hamartia*. We are very close here to Rom. 1.18: *Apokalyptetai gar orgē theou ap' ouranou epi pāsan asebeian kai adikian anthrōpōn tōn tēn alētheian en adikiāi katechontōn* – as we are inclined to say, would not less be juster? Is this the test that must be applied? Does not that ancient civilization deserve a more favourable judgment, if we except the evil of homosexuality? Surely Plato is a part of world literature? But the point here too is that the qualification of *aiōn houtos* by the events of salvation cannot be suspended; the *aiōn houtos* has no structure of its own, separate from its determination through the event of salvation; its structure is determined by the event of salvation, and if the grace of God is rejected then the structure is the divine wrath – *dihoti to gnōston tou theou phaneron estin en autois; ho theos gar autois ephanerōsen*.

Summing up, we can say with Rom. 11.36-12.2 that *secularization is being conformed to this era which rebels against salvation and hence also against the 'of him and through him and to him are all things'*. This secularization can only be avoided if we become transformed through the renewal of our minds and accept the will of God as tried and tested.

If at this point we wish to consider theological secularization, everything depends on the fact that the event of salvation is an *event*, a happening. Everything depends on the fact that time is not excluded from God. Everything depends on the fact that time is not excluded from eternity. This makes it possible for us to understand certain forms of secularization in post-Reformation theology. Later we shall expose our starting-point – that the saving event is an event *in time* – to the attack of Bultmann. And finally we shall turn our attention to



opposing trends as found in Bonhoeffer, Tillich and Robinson's book *Honest to God*.

First let us consider the relationship of time and eternity taking A. E. Loen, *De vaste grond* and K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1 § 31-33 as the basis for our discussion.

It is impossible to talk about eternity abstractly and speculatively. Eternity is God's eternity. The conceptual knowledge of eternity must therefore draw from the knowledge of God and can only be known where he allows himself to be known, that is in his concrete revelation. God reveals himself by speaking to us. God is himself the subject of his revelation. God reveals himself in his Word. The meaning of these expressions (the Word, speech and revelation of God) cannot however, be inferred from the seemingly more familiar meaning of the human word, human speech and human self-revelation. It is not that we apply empirically known concepts to God by analogy, but *vice versa*: it is from the revelation of God that the real, creative meaning of word, speech and revelation can be inferred. God's Word is creative; it is a divine act. In God's Word we can listen to the *fact* and the *content* of his speech. We can render the fact of his speaking in the words of Heb. 1.1-2: God who formerly spoke repeatedly and in different ways to the Fathers has finally spoken to us in his Son. The content of his speech is the salvation that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christ is both the utterer and the utterance of God and hence the truth. The Word in its actuality creates today. Today means being addressed by the eternal God. Today is the presence of God, who reveals himself in his Word; it is the immediacy of eternity.

The content of the Word is therefore also the salvation fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We can also say, the content of the divine revelation is the history of God's strivings with his creation, the progress of his revelation from creation to consummation, and we know this not only in the form of information about what has happened and will happen, but also as the fact of the fulfilling of this event.

Summing up what has been said about the factuality and the content of the Word: in every today the history of the Word is immediately present. In every today, man stands in relation to past and future. Hence in every today, revelation is the origin of time. Today, eternity is the origin of our time.

But (here the *Church Dogmatics* interposes) if eternity (and that is concrete: God as the eternal one) is the origin of our time, is eternity itself then timeless? Of course not. And if we deny this, it is

again not speculative metaphysics but an attempt to express what is contained in God's revelation. God reveals himself – certainly as the free God, over whom we have no control; but not in such a way that behind the *deus revelatus*, who has a purpose in time and fulfils that purpose, the *deus absconditus* stands in timeless immobility. Eternity contains time. *Ex autou kai di' autou kai eis auton ta panta* (Rom. 11.36). *Egō to alpha kai to ō, hē archē kai to telos* (Rev. 21.6), *ho ōn kai ho en kai ho erchomenos* (Rev. 1.8).

The time that belongs to eternity is not, however, our time. Our time is marked by a pulling apart of past, present and future. The past no longer exists, the future does not yet exist, the present has the intangible fleetingness of the moment. The time that belongs to eternity is a web of past, present and future. That does not mean that a constant timeless content is equally related to each of our temporal moments. It is not that God has to do without the time which he gives us. And because God possesses time he can also enter into our time. The incarnation is not a taking on of what God has not, but a *kenosis* into the separation of our time.

The time of eternity includes our created time. Barth coins the expression: God is pre-temporal, extra-temporal and post-temporal. Pre-temporality, extra-temporality and post-temporality are 'forms of the appearance of eternity'.

God is pre-temporal. His existence precedes our own and everything else's.

God is extra-temporal, not in the sense of timelessness, but as the God who creates today by revealing himself. Today God is present as the God who was and is and is to come.

God is post-temporal. We are moving towards him just as we have come from him and as we are allowed to accompany him. He is, when created time has ceased to be. Eternity is the Then after created time, just as it was the Once before it and is the Now above it. It is the purpose and the end in consummation.

## 24 · Secularization in Post-Reformation Theology

God is simultaneously pre-temporal, extra-temporal and post-temporal. The time which God precedes, succeeds and is above is created time, not the time which belongs to eternity itself. These three forms of the unity of God are connected with the three forms (types of being) of the Trinity; they are equally difficult but equally essential. For without the three forms of eternity there is no history, and without history there is no revelation. The divine revelation needs the freedom of movement which history provides and thus needs also the unity of pre-, extra- and post-temporality. Not that revelation is dependent on history – quite the reverse. Revelation constitutes history as the historicity of the Word. Non-historical revelation shrinks to the pin-point of timelessness in which there is no room for the living God.

If now theology stresses one of the forms of eternity to such an extent that the others are neglected, the inevitable result is that history is obscured. This in its turn means preoccupation with this era and forgetfulness of the fact that it is only one phase in a three-fold history – that is to say, it means secularization.

Secularization as the character of being conformed to this world, with the consequent neglect of history (saving history), therefore does not only creep into theology when the extra-temporality of God is stressed. Emphasis on the extra-temporality of God has no special affinity to an exclusive preoccupation with *this* time. Secularization is the setting outside history, an existential confusion of historicity. This can be the result of any unilateral isolation of one of the forms of eternity; it could just as well be isolation of pre-temporality or post-temporality. History only exists in the harmony of all these aeons.

In this connection, Barth<sup>1</sup> gives a survey of secularization in

<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, pp. 712ff.

theology since the Reformation. Unfortunately it is impossible to quote the whole of the passage and a short account of it with the necessary transpositions, omissions and occasional additions must suffice.

The sixteenth-century Reformers, particularly Calvin, laid a one-sided stress on the pre-temporality of eternity. This one-sidedness involves the danger of exclusiveness. Orthodoxy, with its conception of predestination as predetermination, is a victim of this exclusiveness.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, the doctrine of predetermination has never dominated theology undialectically or uncontradicted. But where it has held sway, history has been implicitly denied. History and predetermination never go together because history presupposes the freedom of God and the freedom of man, while predetermination excludes the supra- and post-temporal freedom of God as well as the temporal freedom of man. Denial of history, however, is itself secularization. For this era ceases to hold its proper place, it becomes autonomous, taking on its own 'pattern' in a history of culture which forgets what history is. Among the forms of secularization the first that must be named<sup>2</sup> is the 'spirit of capitalism', 'worldly asceticism' according to Max Weber's famous thesis (*Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, 1904-5; ET, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1930). Weber believes that it is demonstrable that the dominance of capitalism in the areas which were largely influenced by Calvinism is a direct result of the doctrine of election.

A second form of secularization is deism, where the transition from an entelechy-creating predetermination to the self-sufficiency of the present age is obvious.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries lay an equally one-sided stress on the supra-temporality of God. This too involves the danger of exclusiveness. And it is a curious fact that there God, in losing his pre- and post- temporality, also loses his humanity and hence also his accompanying supra-temporality. God's eternity shrinks to the point of timelessness. God is accessible at every moment in the same way as an ideal, timeless content is unreservedly available every moment. Here too real history vanishes; this era appears to be based on itself and has its depth in the ever-present possibility of accessibility to eternity. 'In a really distressing way – infinitely more distressing than in the sixteenth century – the conception of eternity had lost in depth and perspective, so that finally the point was reached where the asser-

<sup>1</sup> A transposition of Barth's view.

<sup>2</sup> Additions.

tion of it was hardly if at all to be distinguished from the denial of its contents. In the last resort – here if anywhere we can see the results of one-sidedness in this matter – it became little more than an exclamation mark which had no positive content, so that it could be placed not only behind the word “God” but behind any word at all denoting a supreme value, even in the very last analysis, as we have seen under National Socialism, behind the word “Germany”. Preferences and prejudices of this kind in the sphere of Christian truth are usually at the beginning of its total secularization.<sup>1</sup>

The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries stress one-sidedly the post-temporality of God. This one-sidedness was, as so often, the outcome of the enthusiasm of a rediscovery – the rediscovery of eschatology. Two things must be mentioned here, both beginning with the widening of a horizon and ending in a new one-sidedness and consequent secularization.

First of all was the message of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by the older and the younger Blumhardt. ‘It is worth noting that the opponent against whom the post-temporality of God was effectively maintained by the two Blumhardts and their most influential theological spokesman, F. Zündel, was not the cultural optimism of Liberal Protestantism. On the contrary, it was the more recent, positively Church-centred Christianity, and especially its pietistic qualities, which they accused of a complete and utter lack of the characteristic of hope which is so distinctive in the message of the New Testament and New Testament faith, of diluting to a purely individual hope of a future life for the soul the confidence and unsettlement of the expectation of the kingdom of God which will rectify the whole world and all life even to its deepest recesses. . . . The younger Blumhardt, H. Kutter and especially L. Ragaz, gave this “fight for the kingdom of God” a particularly surprising turn when they linked it with the eschatology and hope of the Socialist Labour movement. They expressly approved this movement and contrasted it with the Church, theology and Christendom, as the representative realization for our time of the faith that Jesus did not find in Israel. . . . If this application to a temporal hope clarified the problems involved in the new discovery, further clarification came when H. Lhotzky and, above all, Johannes Müller . . . found it quite possible to transpose back into general teaching the whole dynamic of the hope proclaimed in Bad Boll. The accent was now on the

<sup>1</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 632-633.

present and not on the future, and, in good Neo-Protestant fashion, on the present as experienced in individual personal existence. Inevitably, then, the final result was only Pietism of a supposedly higher order, that is, of an expressly secular character. Again, there could be no place for looking to a real hereafter beyond all time, to a real coming of Christ, and therefore for the reality of a confidence and assault invading the world of men from beyond. There was so little place for it that Müller found at last, inevitably, an inglorious end in the slough of the "German Christian" movement of 1933.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly there was the rediscovery of eschatology in New Testament exegesis. 'It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the thesis was propounded and defended that the whole of primitive Christianity was chiefly concerned with the end of all things. F. Overbeck was the first to adopt this position, in opposition to the tradition of the Tübingen school from which he himself had sprung and also in opposition to what was then the modern school of Ritschl, especially A. von Harnack. The view was then taken up by the emerging religious historical movement, and especially by Johannes Weiss (*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, 1892). Finally Albert Schweitzer (*Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1906; ET, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910), with special reference to what he claimed were the unfulfilled words of Jesus about the immediate proximity of his return, built it up into the theory that the whole momentum of the New Testament message and the New Testament faith lay in the hope of Jesus' return and the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth – a hope that had not been fulfilled and was therefore erroneous. Certain of his disciples (as had happened also in the case of Overbeck) took this to mean that in their decisive historical form these had to be abandoned. Schweitzer himself was influenced by it to the extent that he gave his positive teaching the form of an ethic of the philosophy of culture in which the Gospel lives on only in the form of the doctrine (identical with all kinds of Eastern wisdom) that the fashion of this world passes away and our portion can only be active sympathy with its irremediable misery. Here, too, secularization follows hot foot on systematization and the tedious on all the too interesting."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 633-634.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 636.

## 25 · The Gospel and Modern Man

Having exegetically inquired what we are to understand by secularization in theology, we went on to review Barth's systematic and historical survey of examples of it since the Reformation.

Can we let it rest at that? If we did so we should feel as if we had smugly closed our ears to the voices that say, 'You have completely misunderstood the matter. The position is not what you say and it simply cannot remain as it is.'

This does not mean a frontal attack on the qualification of secularization which Barth builds up from a number of theological trends. The voices of which we are speaking do not say: that was not secularization at all. And it is not that we are proposing to expose the voices themselves as expressions of secularization. What they do is to add a question mark to the presuppositions of our whole train of thought on this matter, and for that reason we are bound to give them our attention and bound to provide an answer to them. This has to do with secularization; it relates to our subject; but it relates to it in a different way from our earlier discussion. We are now no longer demonstrating cases of secularization, starting from particular presuppositions; we are reconsidering the very concept of secularization, once more raising for discussion the question of what secularization really is and what attitude we have to take with regard to it.

The voices of which we have spoken have four themes:

1. The Gospel no longer speaks to modern man. He thinks in different categories.
2. The programme of demythologization according to Bultmann.
3. Religionless Christianity, according to Bonhoeffer.
4. God as Being-itself, the ground of our being, according to Tillich.

These themes are naturally interwoven, especially the first and the second. They are named in the same order in J. A. T. Robinson's



well-known book *Honest to God*. We shall, however, consider each according to its merits, apart from this book, and apart also from the question of whether we are doing justice to what actuates Robinson. We can come to Robinson's book itself at the end, since his positive contribution links up with Tillich.

First let us examine the voice which we have defined as saying: the Gospel no longer speaks to modern man. He thinks in different categories.

It seems a highly generalized statement. Even allowing that there is a grain of truth in it, what then? The 'voice' suggests, or says outright, that in this case the Gospel must be so presented that modern man can understand it. In other words: if the categories in which the Gospel is proclaimed do not agree with the categories in which modern man thinks, then the categories in which the Gospel is proclaimed must adjust themselves to those in which modern man does think. According to this voice the categories of the Gospel must conform to the categories of modern man.

There must however be another possibility, namely, that the categories of modern man conform to the categories of the Gospel. Or that they both conform to one another. The 'voice' holds the categories of modern man for inviolable. One feels bound to ask why. Is it a matter of success, of which categories can maintain their ground? What kind of success? Technical success? Success as far as their vitality is concerned? We always believed that it was a matter of their truth. But again, what is this? Or is truth not among the categories of modern man?

It seems to be established, however, that it must be possible to convert the Gospel into the categories of modern man, and that where this is not done, the Gospel categories are antiquated. This presupposes, however, that the Gospel contains something independent of these antiquated categories, something which must be expressible in other categories, namely those of modern man. This is what the 'voice' to which we are at present giving attention believes. There are, of course, other voices which do not share the same presupposition and which interpret the same dictum differently. When they say that 'the Gospel no longer speaks to modern man; he thinks in different categories', they mean 'the Gospel is outworn'. That is not the challenge with which we are dealing at present. We are considering the statement as interpreted to mean that the Gospel has a permanent meaning but that it is frequently today presented in cate-

gories which no longer speak to modern man; and that it must be possible to present the same meaning in modern man's own categories.

We have tried to analyse this first 'voice' – its meaning and its presuppositions – and must now proceed to evaluate it. Is it true that the Gospel no longer appeals to modern man because he thinks in other categories?

The dictum is consciously loaded, oversimplified, apodictic. It speaks of 'modern man', who is non-existent. It may well be true that the Gospel does not appeal to this oversimplified lay-figure; that is, however, an equally oversimplified and thus rootless truth. But we should be going far astray if we considered everything imaginable to which our dictum does not apply. Its intention is to express something simple clearly; and in order to be clear one must oversimplify. That applies to our evaluation as well.

Are the categories in which the Gospel is expressed in the Bible the same as those of modern man? Not entirely. As far as the narrative parts are concerned, for the most part they are naturally the same. We should be sacrificing too much to simplification if we exaggerated there. But modern man does lack other, quite fundamental, categories of the Gospel. Now it may be said, and said truly, that modern man does not exist and that to men as they really are the Gospel has much to say. By saying this, however, we should be ignoring the truth which is expressed in this simplification of modern man with his defective categories.

If then there is no agreement between the categories of modern man and those of the Gospel, which side is to conform? Are the categories of modern man the real ones, as our dictum suggests?

What are modern man's categories? And by what hall-mark is modern man to be recognized?

Modern man – that lay figure so familiar to us all – bases his thinking on the presupposition of 'Reality'. We have repeatedly discussed this conception. 'Reality' is the self-contained cohesion of effects. Everything must be ordered into this one cadre. And this ordering into the one cadre is the same as understanding and explaining. It can be completely accomplished. Everything belongs to 'Reality'; consequently, everything must be capable of inclusion in 'Reality' which thus makes everything completely explicable. Empirical investigation is not yet so far advanced, but it proceeds steadily. To the extent that we can explain and can therefore grasp and under-

stand, we also can fabricate, at least in principle – although it is possible that we are lacking (at least to the required extent) the time or the necessary pressure or temperature for success.

Modern man's account of how experience of reality comes about is a positivist account. Experience means establishing. It is a fact that we can establish 'Reality', whereby it must be said that we do not establish reality as a whole but only the separate elementary parts of reality.

That is more or less the hall-mark of modern man; in his thinking he presupposes 'Reality', which he establishes and thereby experiences. That appears to him so much a matter of course that he is not even conscious of the presupposition of 'Reality' and it does not enter his mind in what an absurd incongruity this unconscious mental presupposition stands to the presuppositions of his life. He surrounds himself with the armour of agnosticism in order to prevent this incongruity from getting through – again in direct contradiction to the conviction that in principle everything, being part of 'Reality', must be completely explicable.

What, then, are the categories of modern man? There are two of them: 'Reality' and 'establishing or registering'. Of course he uses far more, if only because language contains many more words. But he only recognizes these two. He docket all the others with the mental ticket, 'subjective accretion; not real'. Modern man's system of categories is thin and defective in the highest degree.

This means that it is impossible that the categories of the Gospel should or could conform to those of modern man. If secularization of the Gospel means a return to the 'registering' view of reality, then it is silly to think that this secularization is possible or necessary.

'The Gospel no longer speaks to modern man. He thinks in other categories.' That does not mean that the categories of the Gospel must conform to those of modern man. We must not flirt with this narrow, oversimplified lay-figure. So much can be said before we turn our attention to the categories of the Gospel.

Does this now mean that the categories of the Gospel are immutably fixed for all time?

The Gospel comes to us in the Bible, in the Old and New Testaments. The individual books of the Bible are written in the language of their time. Language expresses; a living language coins concepts or categories. Language bears categories, not only in individual words

but also in the inflection and syntax, even in the intonation. Our language is different from the language of the Bible. Does this mean that our categories are different from the biblical ones? That is not necessarily the case. Even though there is every ground for the assertion that the categories, or utterablenesses, are supported by uttering, living language, this does not mean that changes in the language necessarily involve changes in the categories. Categories are not purely and unilaterally dependent on language. If that were the case, translation would be impossible. Whereas it *is* possible, up to a certain point. Within certain limits the same thing can be said in different languages. All the same – it is only within certain limits and up to a certain point, never absolutely. With the change of language categories do in practice change also. That is not unqualifiedly so; in practice it is not even largely so; but it does happen.

We must therefore begin by realizing that the biblical categories are not quite the same as ours. By 'our' categories we do not mean those of 'modern man', the lay-figure whom we cannot really take seriously; we mean the categories which, with some difference of nuance, are common to the modern languages of the West. These are not quite the same as the categories which were a common cultural possession in the first centuries of the Christian era, and they differ still more from the categories of the Jewish people in the Old Testament period. That strikes us at once in reading the Bible. Our system of categories displays a large minus compared with the New Testament, but it also has a plus. The minus is a colossal impoverishment. We saw that 'modern man' only recognizes two categories. In the case of the real contemporary person the erosion does not go quite so far, but none the less the traces of mechanical and technological thinking are evident. Aristotle, for example, recognized four kinds of causality, we know only one. But there is also a plus. The ancient world had only deficient personal categories. Latin and ancient Greek have no word for our 'person'. *Persona* and *prosōpon* mean something different: our 'person' cannot be translated back. The lack of the basic category 'person' in the ancient world makes all categories in the personal sphere deficient. That even applies to Hebrew, notwithstanding its great linguistic power of expression for personal statements, notwithstanding also the fact that it is in Hebrew that we find the basis for our more explicit personal categories.

Does that then mean that the categories of the Gospel are not

unalterably fixed, but that they change with the times? The categories do change, as we have seen. Do the Gospel categories change with them? Or is the Gospel bound to its original categorial expression so that the comprehensibility of the Gospel recedes in proportion to the evolution or devolution of our categories, with a consequent ever-widening cleft? And what about the truth? If categories change does that not mean relativism, historicism? Does one period make one statement (or have one set of categories) and another period make another statement (or have another set of categories) and that is the end of it? Are the categories which change in the course of history not to be measured against the true categories?

What is truth in actual fact? And what is the position of categorial, conceptual truth within the truth itself?

The answer to these questions is contained in the previous chapters: truth as utterance, as distinction between objective (primary: independent) and subjective (secondary: dependent) truth; and, in another dimension, the distinction between existential (whole) and theoretical (defective) truth. It is not 'Reality' which is presupposed, but the sphere of being.

We may perhaps be permitted to review this yet again in a rather different context.

## 26 · The Unity of Truth

There is much that is good and praiseworthy in the development of university scholarship, but it has its less rosy side. To this belongs the fragmentation of specialization and the superficial conception of truth that seems to go with it. If we complain about the fragmentation which results in a superficial conception of truth in the scientific and technical fields, this is due to the fact that we are presupposing a certain view of truth – the view expressed in St John's Gospel (14.6): Jesus Christ is the truth.

But that is just the point: that we cannot find this truth, the truth which Jesus Christ claims to be, in the truth of everyday technical and scientific activity. And if we cannot find it, this means that truth becomes merely an unbelievable pious side-line. That forces us to consider whether the truth of scientific and technical activity is really quite different from the truth of Christ.

Technical and scientific activity meets us in all faculties, even in the theological, but we must limit our examination of its truth to one concrete example. We shall take theoretical physics because the cleft here seems to be greatest.

Either – or. Either there is an equivocation here or the truth of faith includes, qualitatively and quantitatively, in content and scope, the truth of theoretical physics.

In order not to soften the matter in any way, let us formulate the question even more harshly, this time from the point of view of theoretical physics. The progress of theoretical physics includes something that awakes a never-ending astonishment. *This is the high degree to which the object comes to meet the theory.* The progress of theoretical physics rouses in us the experience which we find described in Jules Verne's *L'Île mystérieuse*: the hidden presence of a secret counterpart, an objectivity which encourages and confirms concept-

formation in theoretical physics. Classical physics, the theory of relativity and the quantum theory have achieved far more than was visualized at the beginning. It is positively uncanny how numerically exactly the frequencies of spectrum lines experimentally confirm the Schrödinger equation. And the same thing can be seen again and again – an astonishing accommodation on the part of the object.

The question then arises: is this object which demonstrates itself so compellingly not reality? Is not reality what it is conceived as being in the concepts of theoretical physics? In this question there is an implicit suggestion that 'Reality' means the totality of all being, qualitatively and quantitatively. This is the question of the proper *sphere* of theoretical physics: is theoretical physics concerned with reality as the totality of being? It could be said that this is nonsense, if only because the subject himself is a being. Certainly. But one cannot get rid of the implicit suggestion by pointing out the nonsense in the answer that corroborates it. The question must be answered by a deeper critical penetration, not by elimination.

The question is: *Is the sphere of mathematico-physical truth 'Reality', as the totality of being?*

Now the point of the question of the truth of theoretical physics has a second dimension. There is a second suggestion which affects every physicist: that the particular nature of mathematical and physical truth is the nature of truth in general. This is again a claim for totality, but not now a claim for totality in scope but in kind. It is a devastating claim. For the truth of theoretical physics is theoretical, not existential. It is not a truth by which we can live. And if this kind of truth is *the* truth in general then there is no truth by which we can live and the existential character of all other truth is an illusion.

The question is therefore now: *Is the nature of mathematico-physical truth the nature of truth in general?*

In order to answer these two questions about the *scope* and *kind* of truth, it is necessary for us to extract the concept of *truth* from its naivety. We must therefore put a preliminary question: *What is truth?*

A. What is *truth*?

What are we to understand by the word 'truth'?

In order to answer this, one must proceed from the concrete, phenomenologically. In our case we must pick out the concrete facts from widely varying fields of truth. We shall deal with (1) the truth

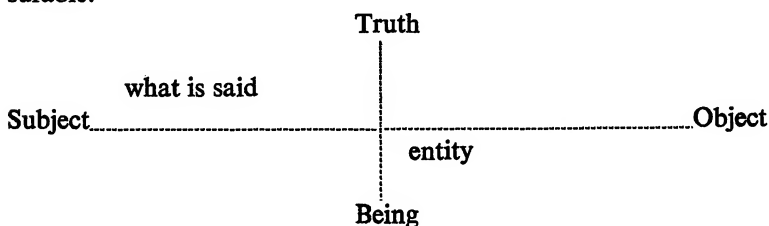


of an established fact, (2) the truth of theoretical physics and (3) the truth of faith.

### 1. *The truth of an established fact*

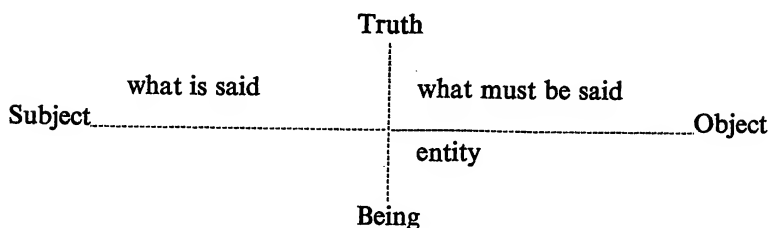
Somebody is speaking the truth when he *says what the position is*. It is raining. Someone says 'It is raining'. He says what the position is. He speaks the truth. In this crystallization of truth there is clearly an agreement. The truth of the statement depends on the agreement between *what is said* and '*what the position is*'. Between 'It is raining' in inverted commas and it is raining, without inverted commas. Can we now say that truth *is* agreement? There are two objections. It is raining. An electronic musical instrument produces the sounds 'it is raining'. Is this electronic instrument now speaking the truth? No, for an instrument cannot speak. It is clear that in the establishment of truth the speaker plays a part – personality and also understanding. The second objection is even more important. *What* agrees with *what*? *What is said* agrees with '*what the position is*'. *What* is this '*what the position is*'? Is it 'being so'? Or even existence? Or a kind of reality? But however can a 'being so' or a kind of existence, being or reality agree with '*what is said*'? Are the two groups not incommensurable? Does not being belong to a different dimension from what-is-stated? So once more – what agrees with what? What is said agrees with '*what the position is*'. What is this '*what the position is*', that it should be normative for and commensurable with '*what is said*'? Only one answer is possible: what must be said. So somebody speaks the truth when he *says what must be said*.

What has now happened? In the sentence 'somebody is speaking the truth' there is evidently a duality. If we define truth primarily as agreement, that inevitably leads to an agreement between what is said on the side of the subject and what is on the side of the object: the being. Then we go astray, because these two are incommensurable.



But agreement is only possible if something is added on the side

of the object which is commensurable with 'what is said', i.e. what must be said.



Then 'truth' ceases to be primarily agreement between one and the other; it is now 'what must be said'. Truth does not *primarily stand between* subject and object; it is on the side of the object. That is the case even when there is no human subject at all and hence no object either. The entity and the truth of the entity in this case lose their position as object. Truth, however, remains as the truth of being, i.e. *the utterance of the entity*. Secondly, however, truth retains its character of agreement. The truth of knowledge and speech is agreement between what is uttered in these and *the truth*. Let us give a preliminary definition, one with which we can certainly not remain content, but which will do for the moment: truth is the utterance and the utterableness of the entity. We call it the objective truth or the truth of being (ontic truth). The truth of speech and knowledge, the subjective or gnostic truth, would therefore consist in agreement with (or participation in) this objective truth.

There is nothing new in this. We started out from truth as agreement, *adaequatio*; Aquinas says *adaequatio intellectus et rei*; we have come up against the difficulties which are inherent in this and we have arrived at a provisional result which was also already familiar to Anselm. He distinguishes between *veritas cognitionis* and *veritas rei*. This *veritas rei* is familiar to the Schoolmen (including Aquinas) under the name *veritas transcendentalis*. We can incidentally go back much further; Aristotle distinguishes between *to gnōrimon pros hēmas* and *to gnōrimon tēi physei*. *To gnōrimon tēi physei* equals *veritas rei* equals *veritas transcendentalis* equals objective truth.

## 2. The truth of theoretical physics

Truth means standard. At what point in theoretical physics is the standard applied? In experiment. Is a section from reality applied as a standard in experiment? Is it the case that in experiment what is

stated in theoretical physics is tested for its agreement with a corresponding piece of reality?

Schematically

what is stated in theoretical physics	
	reality

Not at all. The experiment has an entirely different structure. It is not a straight, point-for-point comparison of a theoretical structure with perceived being in its whole extension. That would in fact be absurd, for what is known, thought, uttered is not reflectable in what is perceived. What is subject to comparison in experiment is something perceptible which has been contrived with immense theoretical effort (e.g. a number on a scale) with something in fact perceived.

What standard is then applied in theoretical physics when its truth is under consideration? It is not an entity, but a conceptuality. And conceptuality presupposes language, since it is utterance or utterableness (which comes to the same thing here, phenomenologically speaking). Conceptuality as utterance or utterableness cannot be eliminated, as positivism believes. Positivism has the scheme:

word-symbol	
symbolized reality	reality

According to positivist epistemology, speech is the producing of verbal sounds (e.g. protocol-statements). Every particular verbal sound is a symbol for a piece of reality (e.g. an impression). The meaning of speech is what it represents: a piece of reality. The truth of speech therefore consists in the agreement of the represented piece of reality with the real piece of reality.

It must here be retorted: if I say X is a symbol for Y, that only makes sense if I know what Y is. The truth into whose nature we are inquiring is the truth of this knowledge. The symbolism of X for Y is a contrived external model and does not belong to the phenomenon of truth. It is quite independent of knowledge of Y. The agreement of what is represented with 'reality' belongs equally little to the phenomenon of truth. What does belong is that the uttering

knowledge derives its life from the objective utterance without ever having the power to establish that utterance.

If we hold by the phenomenal result we can only say that even in the case of theoretical physics truth is primarily the objective conceptuality, i.e. utterance or utterableness; and only secondarily participation in objective truth.

### 3. *The truth of faith*

The *objective* truth of faith is Jesus Christ, the divine utterance, the Word (Logos). That is more than conceptuality though it includes conceptuality. Here is the fullness of truth. Even in the Old Testament God's truth is his faithfulness and constancy. What God says and does, and at the same time what he wills, strives for and creates through his speech and activity, is *per se* true.

In the truth and therefore the faithfulness of God, that of man has its origin as well as its object and criterion. The New Testament usage does not involve any change in basic meaning. *Alētheia* too means in itself and as such that which in itself is permanent, valid and trustworthy, thus giving the character of what is right to human speaking and acting. Nor does it make any material difference if that which is right as understood in this way is now described as *alētheia* and therefore related to the concept of God's revelation and indeed identified with it; if the knowledge of the truth . . . is now expressly understood as the knowledge of faith; if together with grace and in consequence of grace the truth is described as the fullness of the only-begotten Son of God; . . . if Jesus Christ himself is called the truth.<sup>1</sup>

The objective truth of faith is Jesus Christ in the unity of his offices. 'Word', 'Logos' does not apply only to the prophetic work of Christ.

The *subjective* truth of faith is participation in objective truth. This participation comes about in at least three ways:

1. Existential participation beyond all subjectivity and thus beyond faith. The existence of man is in its essence participation in the Word of creation which is 'in' Jesus Christ (Col. 1.16). But the whole saving activity of God in Christ also has existential significance for all men.

2. Existential participation in the Holy Spirit. The participation of the branches in the vine.

3. Conceptual participation. The conceptuality of faith, of proclamation, of theology, is participation in the divine intellectuality.

<sup>1</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, p. 207.

Compared with existential participation this is something subsidiary, but it is none the less an essential condition of the former. It is only this third aspect of the subjective truth of faith which corresponds to the subjective truth of an established fact and of science.

In the phenomenological analysis of the crystallized forms of truth, the unity of truth was demonstrated. Not as a genus whose species are the crystallized forms. Not, perhaps: genus as objective utterance with subjective participation; species as the conceptuality of the Word of God among other conceptualities. But Jesus Christ as the fullness of truth, as primal truth, as the real meaning of the word truth. And the truth of theoretical physics showed itself to be a defective truth. It has certainly the phenomenal character of utterance but without including the speaker in the phenomenon. Utterance is essentially personal, but the personal character of scientific truth is phenomenally a curious blank.

B. Is the *nature* of mathematico-physical truth the nature of truth as a whole?

Is the nature of mathematico-physical truth theoretical, detached, non-existential, neutral? Does truth as a whole take its colouring from this?

We have already answered 'no' to this question. The fullness of truth, Jesus Christ, is the very opposite. But how is it possible for the nature of defective truth to be the very opposite of real truth? To be defective means privation, not contrariety.

The answer is that the sterility of scientific truth is not a solid, undialectical, essential characteristic of this kind. Even the truth of theoretical physics has the phenomenal character of defectiveness; theoretical truth contains within itself the back-reference to existential truth as the basis that makes it possible. There is therefore no homogeneous final and complete theoretical sphere which is to be contrasted with a sphere of faith. There is no dimensional division between what a man can accept with a clear scientific conscience and what he can live by. That must now be briefly demonstrated.

It is in fact implicit in what has been said about the nature of mathematico-physical truth: this truth has the phenomenal character of an utterance or utterableness. Speech, however, belongs to the personal sphere. It is part of the nature of truth that the sphere of 'things' is not independent but is based on the personal sphere, so that the theoretical is not independent, but is based on the existential.

That truth exists is only one of science's presuppositions. There are others. There is a limitless field of scientific presuppositions in which the borderline between being and conceptual being-present grows blurred. Scientific knowledge is based on these presuppositions and it is impossible to isolate it as a rootlessly self-sufficient entity.

Among these presuppositions there is a graduation from general to particular, from those which deal with form to those which deal with content.

A general presupposition of every science is that science is possible. To that belongs not only the presupposition that truth exists but also that this truth can be perceived. Perceived by whom? Perceived by a person. Who is the person who can perceive truth? This possibility of perceiving truth theoretically is as such an existential possibility, one which is part of human existence and cannot be regarded as a self-contained sphere. But what then is this human existence to which this possibility of theoretical perception of objective, ontic truth belongs? Human existence is constituted in the speech of God. The voice of God is creative utterance of being. Moreover it is the heart of the Gospel that the voice of God goes back to his testimony of himself in Jesus Christ. Christ is the fullness of truth from the side of the subject also.

It might, however, be said that this is only formal and belongs only to externals; the physicist notices nothing of this in the chain of reasoning that makes up his science. Let us therefore turn to the content. What is in fact the position with regard to the chain of reasoning? Is it self-sufficient in its theoretical purity, untouched by existential infection?

When we view the content of science in relation to the presupposition of truth, we must once more distinguish between form and content. The form of the chain of reasoning in theoretical physics is logical conclusion. The content is what is arrived at.

Theoretical logic is concerned to emphasize the purity of logical argument. This too is unsuccessful. Logic cannot detach itself from its extra-logical presuppositions. The steps in logical progression from premise to conclusion need a space in which they can move; if one tries in a metatheory to logicize this space, one needs for the mental steps in the metatheory a space with relatively more dimensions. In other words, in logical argument it is a fundamental fact that one cannot free oneself from the naivety of the presuppositions. That is the result of a theorem demonstrated by K. Gödel in

1931.<sup>1</sup> Naivety in the presuppositions, however, means recourse to trust, a breach in the wall of theoretical objectivity!

Finally, we come to the *content* of the chain of reasoning in theoretical physics. If one gives a *strict* account of the extent to which the assertions of physics are proved, it appears that the theoretical motivation rests on a basis of trust, of faith – admittedly a defective trust and faith (we do not wish to devalue the words) but still: a trust or faith which is certainly not theoretically detached. Even in theoretical physics we can say nothing without saying more than we can substantiate theoretically. We must limit ourselves to one among the many things that might be instanced here.

Theoretical physics rests on the presupposition that it can find in events a regularity of a certain kind which is capable of mathematical expression. This regularity can only be found, however, if it *is there* and must be *uttered*, in other words if this regularity is a *category*. The category of mathematico-physical causality is in fact the basic category of theoretical physics and makes it possible; it is also constitutive for theoretical physics.

What guarantee have we, however, that this regularity is present and discoverable? What guarantee have we that the next moment the event will not behave quite differently, according to quite different laws, or (what is very much more probable) according to no laws at all? There is no detachedly theoretical reason at all: only trust, faith – defective but none the less trust and faith.

C. Is the *sphere* of mathematico-physical truth reality as the totality of being?

The answer is no. 'Reality' is the concealed presupposition of contemporary thought and it is false. 'Reality' is not the totality of being, it is not even a section from the totality of being. It is simply a false presupposition, a myth which must be demythologized. Incidentally we too have no right to speak of a *totality* of being.

What is then the sphere of mathematico-physical truth? What is the object of theoretical physics? And what is the unity within which the specialized sciences and also philosophy and theology move?

Every specialized science depends on a methodological idea which crystallizes in the course of that science's development into a particular basic category or group of categories. The question is now? what is the unity of truth to which these basic categories all belong:

<sup>1</sup> K. Gödel, 'Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme', *Monatshefte für Mathematik und Physik*, 38 (1931).



Since, however, truth is the utterance of being, this question runs parallel to the second one: what is the unity of being to which the objects of the specialized sciences all belong? It seems obvious that the answer to this last question is: this unity is 'Reality'; every specialized science has as its object a section of this reality. In our opinion this answer is simply the crystallization of the opinion (stemming from a particular view of life) that the theoretical sphere forms a homogeneous whole. If we re-examine this opinion as we have done, then the answer to the question of the unity of *truth* is: the utterance of God (which is a subjective genitive) and the answer to the question of the unity to which the objects of the specialized sciences belong is: the unity which is and will be uttered in God's creative Word.

This really means that 'Reality' is replaced by 'being', and hence that the reality as coordinate system is replaced by the coordinate system of the saving activity of God. That has far-reaching consequences.

1. 'Reality' is the presupposition underlying the modern attitude to life. 'Reality' is the self-contained whole of mutually homogeneous effects in their interplay. This self-contained reality is the realm of human experience. Thus experience also becomes a self-contained whole. Reality is *hen kai pan*. There is no longer any room for God. And if room is made for him in an impossible transcendence God can have no influence on reality, since reality is self-contained; and thus God cannot be experienced since experience is self-contained.

If, now, reality is replaced by being, this being includes both God, as *the* being, and created being. Yet there is no substantial unity between the being of God and the being of creation; there is no causal unity; no unity as object of any dominating categorial thought. Even the most concrete scientific thought is marked by the fact that creation has a *conferred* independence of being.

2. The sphere of science is now the unity of being, though this is not, as we have just seen, a distinctionless unity; on the contrary, it holds within itself the difference between God and his creation. This God is the concrete God, Father of Jesus Christ. And again: even the most concrete scientific thought is marked by the fact that it cannot proceed from independent, first, general principles but that the general conceptualness which it finds has its origin in this same concrete God.

3. It follows from this that thought cannot strive towards a

harmony which surpasses the harmony in the speech and activity of this concrete God. And the harmony, or let us say the peace, of God holds within itself the disharmony of the struggle against sin and evil. That too can be relevant for the specialized sciences, and especially for historical scholarship.

4. In the sphere of being there is room for the *different* specialized sciences with their different methodological ideas and groups of basic categories. There was no room for them in 'Reality' since reality was conceived of in categorically homogeneous terms. Every specialized science acts in the sphere of being as a particular cadre. A thing is real when it can be included in such a cadre. The different cadres have different positions in the sphere of being and different bases, i.e. methodological ideas. The methodological idea of physics is not related to the concrete workings of God, whereas the methodological idea of historical scholarship is. That a particular specialized science is possible is only demonstrable *a posteriori* by the success of the application of its basic categories; this possibility cannot be demonstrated *a priori*. The basic categories only crystallize in the course of application, under the guidance of the methodological idea.

5. With the replacement of reality by the sphere of being the subornation to trespass across the borders of the categories is halted. There is room for various specialized sciences, abundant room. There is then no occasion to make any one specialized science absolute. 'Reality' is secretly thought of as nature, with attendant absolutism of the physical categories. But the sphere of being cannot be conceived of in terms of nature alone.

## 27 · The Eternal Categories

Our subjective categories may therefore be subject to change. This change is not, however, independent of the truth, but is still bound to the objective categories. And these objective categories are not the separate bricks of a timeless structure of truth; they are concepts set in the eternal Word of God. The *telos* of our knowledge and our speech is the objective truth. It is consequently not our intention to apply subjective categories; the aim of theological knowledge is understanding of the categories which are eternal. It is only by taking a historical view that we see that the categories which attempted to echo the eternal categories changed, thus showing themselves to be subjective, deviations from the objective categories. We have also seen that this alteration of the subjective categories does not always mean progress, in the sense of an increasing approximation to the objective categories.

What, then, are the causes of this historical modification of the subjective categories? What drives history forward? In this case: what drives the history of ideas, the history of the subjective categories, forward? If the forces effective in the historical process were purely inherent ones, in the sense of historicism, then we should end up in relativism. In this case it would be of no help for the subjective categories to have the objective ones as their measuring rod, for the result of its application would remain eternally concealed from us. Our sole comfort would be that there is a transcendent God who knows, although we remain for ever ignorant. Then it would also no longer be possible to call subjective truth *participation* in objective truth, for participation stands in contradiction to unapproachable transcendence.

These challenges are a variation of the question about the nature of history which we have already discussed. In historicism in particular (i.e. in the view that the effective forces in the historical process

are inherent ones) we detected a categorial impoverishment. In the context which now concerns us, it must be said that the incarnation invalidates the inherent-transcendent pattern. Jesus Christ is the objective truth; this objective truth is not transcendent, but communicates itself in the Holy Spirit; conceptual perception is a subsidiary factor in this participation. The leading of the Holy Spirit is one of the forces effective in the historical process. Is then this leading only one among many forces, all of equal importance? The answer to this question obviously raises new problems. We spoke of this when discussing the question of the nature of history. We then inquired who the subject of history is and arrived at no conclusive answer. But the fact that the answer gives rise to new questions, thus demonstrating its inadequacy, need not prevent us from affirming that the leading of the Holy Spirit is one of the forces effective in the historical process.

What happens when the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth? In other words, what is the content of the category of the divine activity? What are we to understand by the activity of God? In the attempt to find an answer to this question a difficulty arises; for the word activity has a particular meaning of which we have a certain conception, even if we do not fully comprehend it. We believe that we know more or less what we are to understand by being active. Now there is the danger of our interpreting the activity of God as a specific form of the activity which we think we understand. This danger naturally applies not only to activity but to all the basic words of the Bible. Understanding involves thought, thought involves speech, speech is secular; how can we then understand the things of God? How is knowledge of God and hence knowledge of the activity of God possible? Knowledge comes about through language; is then our language an adequate vessel for the activity of God, God himself?

Three main answers have been given to the question of how it is possible with our language – that is to say with our concepts – to know God.

1. The first theory says that knowledge of God is only possible by means of negation, *via negationis*: namely by denying the applicability of our finite concepts to God. That is really purely negative: the impossibility of conceptual knowledge of God ('negative theology'). But the silent implication is that this impossibility of a *conceptual* knowledge of God is compensated for by a *mystical* know-

ledge, not through concepts, not through words, but through direct mystical experience.

2. According to the second view, knowledge of God is only possible by surpassing what we know, *via eminentiae*; i.e. our words and hence our concepts are applicable to God but are qualitatively insufficient, so that they demand a mental extrapolation to enhance them. The characteristics of God are similar in kind to the content of human concepts but more perfect, in fact perfect in the highest degree.

3. The third doctrine holds that knowledge of God is only possible by means of analogy, *analogia entis*. The relationship of being to characteristics is the same in God as in man; since we know what the relationship is in man, we also know what it is in God.

None of these three answers is acceptable. They relate to a transcendent *ens supremum*, not to the Father of Jesus Christ. They start from the presupposition that the unapproachable light in which God dwells is a transcendent sphere, unapproachable by our knowledge because this is limited to an immanent and empirical sphere.

We are therefore faced once more with the question, how can our language be applicable to God? And, since knowledge comes about through the medium of speech, how can we know God? This question as to the capacity of language relates primarily to the categories. Categories are those parts of language which represent a hidden, non-demonstrable content. Thus 'activity' is a category. Activity is something particular, something objective, independent of any subjective concept that may be assigned to it. We cannot define the concept 'activity' just as we choose; any potential definition must declare what activity is. It cannot be a nominal definition (*definitio nominalis*); it must be a real one (*definitio realis*). But we cannot put our finger on the thing itself. It is hidden from us – not completely so, it may perhaps be partially illuminable through reflection. But a hiddenness, a secret, always remains. Activity is consequently a category. Causality is another; substantiality yet another. But righteousness and love are also categories.

To the question of how our language, especially the categories, can be applicable to God and thus make knowledge of him possible, it may now be answered that God's revelation is constitutive for the qualitative content of many categories. That applies to the category of 'activity' among others. The real, objective meaning of the word 'activity' is the activity of God; of which the activity of man is only

a faint echo. It is an echo, a similarity. In the order of being, man is created in the image of God, with a similarity to him. But what about the order of knowledge? The position is not that postulated in the *via negationis*, the *via eminentiae* and the *analogia entis*, for example. According to these, activity in the immanent human sphere is the thing that is familiar from experience and from that starting-point we have to understand the activity which God pursues by means of an uncertain and cloudy extrapolation in the direction of the unknown transcendence. But the position is reversed; the order of knowledge must follow the order of being. The activity of God is more primal than the activity of man, in knowledge as in being, and this applies both to the cognitive form and to the cognitive content. With respect to the form, knowledge of the divine activity is not conferred as an innate idea, so that we know all about it by the light of nature and from that point can clearly deduce the activity of man; we gain knowledge of the activity of God from God's revelation, revelation as *actus*, not as *actum*. With respect to the content, the Bible does not contain a definition of activity which, if we learn it by heart, will give us complete information about the activity of God. God reveals himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Here it must be stressed, however, that the revelation is revelation through the Word. It is not conferred in mystical directness but through the medium of speech. For speech is again one of the categories whose real meaning is contained in the divine speech (Christ as the Word, the witness of the Holy Spirit). And because revelation is conferred through the medium of speech, it is revelation that is the bearer of the concept. When attempts are made to formulate concepts about God's revelation, the attempts are only possible because revelation offers itself in conceptual form.

Thus our knowledge of the category 'activity' is bound to have its origin in revelation. God is revealing himself, however, and revelation is the activity of God. We can therefore say that our knowledge of the content of the categories has its origin in the unknown, namely in the inner nature of God. The content of the category 'activity' is part of the activity of God and is comprehensible only in this way; and the activity of God is the expression of his inmost nature. We cannot, however, comprehend this inmost nature even in the divine revelation, which is why we said that our knowledge is rooted in the unknown. But it is not a neutral unknown. The inmost nature of God is the unapproachable *light* from which all conceptuality

emanates. But it is the *unapproachable* light. The source of conceptuality itself surpasses our concepts.

At this point two things must be said. The first is that in all this we do not mean an abstract God, an *ens supremum*, but the triune God, the concrete God, the God who reveals himself, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The second comment is that there is no contrast between the inmost nature of God and revelation, no contrast between the *deus absconditus*, who is a God of wrath, and the *deus revelatus*, who is a God of grace. The revelation is not a facade behind which terror lurks. Jesus Christ is the truth; in him God expresses himself fully and without reserve. But it is this very revelation – running right through cross and resurrection – which also reveals the incomprehensibility of God. This incomprehensibility is therefore not darkness and abyss, but the unapproachableness of the source of light by which we are illumined, the holiness of the love which gives us life.

This is the position with many categories, including the category 'activity'. Its *conceptuality*, i.e. its utterableness and translatableness into speech, is guaranteed by the fact that revelation is verbal revelation, i.e. that God reveals himself through his speaking. Its *qualitative content*, i.e. what activity really is, is concealed in the inner nature of God. It is, however, a transparent concealment which is the source of the revealableness of the significance of the concept.

We are dealing here with the function of speech in knowledge. This function becomes concrete in speaking. Then we see that speech has a double cognitive function, namely in its relation to *what is spoken* and in its relation to the *speaker*. It might be said that the speaker reveals what is spoken in language. And in the real, original sense that also applies to the speech of God. The revelation in language of what is spoken is the concept. But speech is in itself revealing for the speaker. That is, however, a different kind of revealableness from the first. This revealableness (of the speaker) is tied to the actuality of speech, that is to say is tied to the encounter which takes place in speech, is tied to the I-Thou relationship, which realizes itself in speech. We must not forget here that this applies in the real sense to the speech of God; that is, not to an undetermined I but to God as the speaker. God reveals himself in his speaking, not primarily because he himself is the spoken, though that may also be true, but above all because he speaks creatively out of the midst of his (for us) incomprehensible inmost nature, which is the same as



saying that he acts in Christ, who is his Word. Christ is the Word in the answer which he gives to the Father's Word. In this answer, in his work of obedience, Christ reveals the inner mind of God. We have just said that the revelation of what is spoken in language is the concept, and we shall return to this point. At the moment we will only say that the revelation of the speaker in speech is the Word and the Word also contains the possibility of the concept. The Word can be expressed in language because it proceeds from the inmost nature of God and because speech is his true manifestation.

Now the speaker also reveals in speech what is spoken and the revelation of what is spoken is the concept. The concept is the revealableness, the uncoveredness, the *alētheia* of the thing; it is not outside the language but belongs to it. It is thus not that the thing is first known (i.e. uncovered, *alēthes*) and that a concept is then formed representing that known thing. It is in the concept, in language, that the thing is known in the first place. But in contrast to the revelation of the speaker, in the revelation of what is spoken, speech and concept take on an autonomous character. The speaker only reveals himself in actually speaking; but the spoken is revealed in the concept even when it is no longer actually being spoken. The concept has a permanence which is at man's disposal and to which he can at any time return in order to gain knowledge of the thing. It is thus also possible to preserve knowledge in writing.

The other revelation, that of the speaker, is bound to the actuality of speech, to the encounter, and therefore cannot be immediately preserved in writing. That is only possible if the speaker makes himself what is spoken or – but then indirectly – if we turn the speaker into what is spoken. There is, however, something artificial in this. That is the disadvantage of dogmatics compared with other studies.

The Bible has a unique place among books because it is not primarily a deposit of permanent concepts, to which cognition can return at will in order to know a thing; but because in the reading of the Bible the speech of God can become alive and present, when God in his Holy Spirit wills it. Only then does the revelation of the speaker come to pass.

## 28 · Rudolf Bultmann: The Programme of Demythologization

We have considered the first of the four themes which are discussed in Robinson's book *Honest to God*. This was the challenge to which the other three are a reply. We formulated it in the dictum, 'The Gospel no longer speaks to modern man; he thinks in different categories.' To what conclusion did we come? It was neither a direct confirmation nor a direct denial. It was a rejection of the suggestion that we must or can apply the categories of the lay-figure 'modern man'. It was a confirmation of the possibility that the subjective categories in which thought is practically embodied may change in the course of history. But the truth of the changing categories can be tested against the norm of the objective categories of the Gospel.

Now Bultmann holds the view that the categories in which the Gospel is expressed in the Bible are in fact out of date and he discusses the new categories which he claims are the appropriate ones.

According to Bultmann, the biblical categories are inapposite because the saving activity of God is seen as a part of reality. The biblical world picture is thus mythical. The programme of demythologization consists of the demand for a clear-cut distinction between the categories in which space-time reality is conceived and the categories in which the Gospel is proclaimed. For in actual fact, says Bultmann, the saving activity of God does not operate within space-time reality but within a dimension of its own, the dimension of the proclamation, in which human existence is directly related to God.

Bultmann thus replaces the ontological scheme of the New Testament by what is according to him the true ontology: namely the divorce between reality on the one hand and human existence in its relation to the non-temporal eschaton on the other. The suggestive power of Bultmann's position lies in two arguments:

1. The rejection of what he believes to be the ontological scheme of the New Testament, the three-storeyed reality; the freeing of the Gospel from this out-dated ontological scheme; and the interpretation of the Gospel as existential claim. Our criticism will be that the ontological scheme of the New Testament is not in fact this three-storeyed reality at all but what we have called the 'sphere of being'.

2. The thesis that faith cannot be orientated towards historical facts. This thesis therefore has nothing to do with the replacement of the ancient ontological scheme by Bultmann's, but belongs to the latter, i.e. reality + existence. Our criticism was and will be again that the divine revelation does not only have a dimension perpendicular to time but also one in time.

1. What gives the iconoclasm of Bultmann's almost classic essay 'New Testament and Mythology'<sup>1</sup> its suggestive power? It is not so much the negative aspect, the abolition of what he calls the mythological view of the world, as the positive aim that he has in view: to hear the truth of the Gospel in the full cogency of the Word of God. That is what we all long for: the cogency of the Word, a Gospel which has existential appeal, which can break down hindrances, can be ecumenically and cosmically effective – the lucidity of the Holy Spirit. This Gospel is surely there. Has it not taken possession of us? It must surely be possible to hear it in its pure, eternal categories, in the very truth of God.

In what direction are these true, eternal categories of the Gospel to be sought? One thing is clear: they are not categories belonging to 'Reality'. Bultmann presupposes this 'Reality' as a self-contained totality of effects which we can conceive scientifically and control technically; but compared with 'modern man' there is the big difference that for Bultmann reality is not totality. Totality is for him reality + the non-temporal dimension of human existence in its relationship to God. The true categories of the Gospel are to be sought, according to Bultmann, in this non-temporal dimension, not in 'Reality'.

When we at this point turn once more to the categories of the New Testament, we discover embarrassingly that the clear-cut division between reality and the existential dimension is not carried through and that consequently the categories of both dimensions are impure.

<sup>1</sup> R. Bultmann, 'Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen': Beiträge zur Evang. Theol. 7 (1941); now in *Kerygma und Mythos*, 3rd ed. 1954, ET by R. H. Fuller, *Kerygma and Myth*, 2nd ed., S.P.C.K., 1964.

We are told that the whole New Testament kerygma is saturated with mythology. Bultmann understands by 'mythological' this mixture of the categories of reality and the categories of existence (existentials), through which 'the other-worldly is expressed in terms of this world, the other side in terms of this side'.<sup>1</sup> The existential is conceived of as part of reality. The division which Bultmann demands really amounts to an existential interpretation of the dualistic mythology of the New Testament – of course parallel to a physical study of reality.

This makes everything dependent on the presupposition of 'Reality'. If we do not share Bultmann's presupposition but have to replace it by the presupposition of the sphere of being, then a landslide comes about in our thinking which also shakes up all assertions about the mythological view of the world in the New Testament, both as regards the meaning of the word 'mythological' and as regards the evaluation and scope of mythology.

This is not the same as saying that everything is not as bad as Bultmann paints it. It means that the saving activity of God is, according to the eternal categories of the Gospel, the presupposition for faith and for all learning, including the natural sciences, and in consequence that the scientific categories cannot be the rival of those of the Gospel. That fits phenomenologically as well. For phenomenologically, physics is a cadre within the sphere of being. And it fits as far as the concept of experience is concerned. For the concept of experience must be freed both from the positivist limitation to the establishing of elementary data and from the Cartesian imprisonment in the hypostatic subject.

If our thinking moves within the framework of the sphere of being, as it must and may according to the truth which is in Christ – if, that is, the saving activity of God to which Old and New Testaments witness is our presupposition, then the ontology of the Old and New Testaments is that very encompassing sphere within which scholarly (both theological and non-theological) concepts and the concepts of faith must be framed. Then the modern antithetical emphasis on the mythological cosmology of the New Testament becomes trifling, a chasing after the cosmic picture as if this were of decisive importance for the ontology. There is no doubt that we know a great deal more about the spatial distribution of the stars than the evangelists did; but this is not to say that the evangelists' views on space show them

<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 10, note 2.

to have been mentally primitive. Cosmology is of no great ontological importance, for being is the being of God.

The categories in which this divine being – we could also say in which the Gospel – is expressed in the Bible are not fully adequate. Theology and the proclamation of the Gospel can do no more than strive towards adequate categories, in adherence to the biblical testimony. The categories which are at our disposal in the language and culture of our time are in part even less adequate. Proclamation and theology can therefore only wait prayerfully (which means actively and critically) for the renewal of language through the Holy Spirit. That demands an attentive ear. Bultmann would no doubt agree with this. Where we differ from Bultmann, however, is in the conviction that an attentive ear for the Bible does not lead us to demythologization, which cleanses by means of destruction and an existential interpretation; but that it is the cleansing power of the biblical categories which sweeps away the myth of reality as a self-contained whole of effects.

The ontological division which Bultmann makes between 'Reality' and eschaton-orientated existence has consequences in the realm of truth. The truth which is related to reality is quite different in kind from the truth of existence. The truth of reality is cold, theoretical, a matter of registering facts; the truth of existence is the truth of proclamation, it claims man, forces him to decision, sets him in a turmoil. The result of Bultmann's ontological division is therefore an existential cleft, the cleft between 'Man's knowledge and mastery of the world . . . through science and technology'<sup>1</sup> and 'faith in the grace of God. [That] means faith that the unseen, intangible reality actually confronts us as love, opening up our future and signifying not death but life.'<sup>2</sup> This is supposed to be the existential interpretation of the biblical concepts of the old and the new man, death and life, past and future. In the Bible this contrast is not a cleft but a matter of transition. The saving activity of God creates history. And what is the position in Bultmann? That brings us to the second point.

2. The suggestive power of Bultmann's position consists secondarily in the sentence that faith cannot be orientated towards historical facts.

Since we have discussed history in chapters 15-17 we can be brief here.

Like Bultmann, we believe that divine revelation has a non-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

temporal dimension. God reveals himself in the immediacy of his speaking and the speech of God belongs to a dimension perpendicular to time. The Word creates today and calls man into today. The Word is *per se* the immediate speech of God, which belongs to today, never to yesterday. Even if we hear the Word in the testimony that comes to us from the past, the Word none the less calls us into today and we become contemporary with those past witnesses.

We differ from Bultmann, however, in believing that the divine revelation also has a temporal dimension. The content of the Word is an event: the saving activity of God. Now the saving activity of God is not the prisoner of time; one cannot actually say that the creation was a temporal event; but with Israel God acted in time and in Christ he also acted in time. From creation to consummation is thus an eminently temporal progression; it is the real history. If instead of reality the sphere of being is presupposed, i.e. the saving activity of God, who is being and calls being into existence, we in fact already have the temporal dimension of revelation.

Bultmann, on the other hand, must find a place for the content of proclamation in the non-temporal dimension. That applies both to the creation and to the second coming. The eschaton is for him that towards which human existence today is orientated in faith.

In order to be able to carry this through consistently it would of course be necessary completely to replace historicity by historicality. That would only be possible on the basis of Heidegger's autarchic existence of *Being and Time* – to which even the later Heidegger no longer adheres. In as far as Bultmann cannot take over this autarchic existence, he cannot eliminate the existential meaning of objective history. That leads to obscurities: the clear-cut division between 'Reality' and existence in its relation to the eschaton, which is essential for an understanding of Bultmann, becomes blurred.

## 29 · Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Religionless Christianity

The source of the expression 'religionless Christianity' is to be found in the collection of Bonhoeffer's writings called *Letters and Papers from Prison*.<sup>1</sup> It was from there that the phrase spread. For spiritual movements of this kind, however, the pinning down of sources can only be relative. In his book *Beyond Religion*,<sup>2</sup> Daniel Jenkins also gives Barth and Tillich as sources; but there is no doubt that Bonhoeffer is the source in a special sense. In his case this motif has a break-through character, the urgency of the not yet fully understood idea which is struggling up from the centre of existence towards a concept.

This fact is connected with the general and personal situation in which these letters and papers were written. It must not be forgotten that Bonhoeffer was hanged on April 9, 1945. Seen from this perspective, the book testifies to more than the ideas about religionless Christianity which we are about to analyse and criticize. It is a witness of Christian discipleship. If the ideas on religionless Christianity were an essential part of this life and death we should have to fall silent. It is our contention, however, that precisely the opposite is the case. That certainly does not mean, on the other hand, that we are now about to put up a defence for religion.

What Bonhoeffer brings up for discussion is the form that the Christian life is to take in the future. In this he rightly takes into account the situation of the modern world in which the Gospel may and must be preached. The point at issue and the urgency with which Bonhoeffer presents it are not affected by the objections which we believe must be brought forward. These objections are: that Bon-

<sup>1</sup> D. Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, 12th impression 1964, ET *Letters and Papers from Prison*, (SCM Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> D. Jenkins, *Beyond Religion. The Truth and Error in 'Religionless Christianity'* (SCM Press, 1962).



hoeffer chooses to express what he and we have at heart in the form of the demand for a 'religionless Christianity'; that it is not clear what he means by this; that the various reasons that he gives emerge confusingly here and there from a conviction which is clearer in its 'anti' than in its 'pro'; and that several of the reasons proceed from false presuppositions – e.g. his argument for religionless Christianity in what he calls the autonomy or coming of age of the world.

What we now have to do is to interpret what is 'right' in Bonhoeffer within the coordinate system of the true presuppositions. That is not a transformation of coordinates; the objection to Bonhoeffer's ideas is that they have no coordinate system at all. There are certainly indications, but they are based on presuppositions which remain unexpressed and cannot be reconstructed into the unity of a coordinate system; and which, moreover, in as far as they can be fragmentarily reconstructed, are partly untrue.

The attempt at corrective transference must begin with our asking what religion really is. The systematic examination of the place of religion demands an understanding of subjectivity, and that in its turn demands an understanding of what is meant by 'truth' and 'being'. With this the tracing back to the fixed coordinate system is complete; at the same time the false presupposition of 'Reality' is exposed and it thus becomes possible to evaluate Bonhoeffer's ideas about the coming of age of the world. For the most part this evaluation will be a repetition of what has already been said more than once. But at the same time we must attempt to express what Bonhoeffer is really aiming at on the basis of these presuppositions as a system of coordinates.

Bonhoeffer's demand is for religionless Christianity. What is in fact meant by religion? It may mean two things:

1. By *a* religion can be meant one of the existing, or no-longer existing, religions – Christianity, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, the religion of ancient Egypt, etc. These religions are figures in empirical history. Here mutual comparison is in the foreground. This talk about religions and a religion is therefore confined from the very beginning to the cadre of empirical history. This limitation implies a reticence with regard to the question of truth. As soon as we put the real questions, thus recognizing the sphere of being as the true presupposition, we cease to be able to talk in this way about religions as if they were historical phenomena of a similar nature. The limitation to the cadre of empirical history becomes

unstable, as always, when history is extended to the present day.

2. By religion can also be meant a specific kind of experience, behaviour and thought which is distinct from non-religious types of experience, behaviour and thought and is in contrast to what is postulated in religion as objective. In short, it can mean everything which happens on the human side within the specific field of religion. As far as Christianity is concerned, religion is everything that the Christian individually (or corporately as the church) experiences, does and professes, in as far as it is 'Christian'. So we believe, regardless of the fact that the divisions indicated cannot be preserved: for no-one has ever succeeded in defining specifically religious as distinct from non-religious subjectivity. Here too the cadre is unstable, being an anthropology which believes that it rests on empirical appearances; which is impossible.<sup>1</sup> We are forced out of this cadre towards the sphere of being.

It is now obvious that, taking either meaning of the word religion, religionless Christianity is impossible. As far as the first meaning is concerned, Christianity *is* a religion. As regards the second, something does after all happen on the human level in Christianity. Nor dare we strive for religionlessness. The Lord God demands man's response. This human response can then be established and investigated as experience, behaviour and thought within various cadres. Consequently religionless Christianity is a poor choice of phrase for what Bonhoeffer probably means.

If, and in as far as, Bonhoeffer means with his rejection of 'inwardness'<sup>2</sup> that the subjective participation in the objective truth is not the basis of this objective truth, we are in entire agreement.

Or again, if, and in as far as, his rejection of 'the religious premise'<sup>3</sup> means that the Christian proclamation cannot continue to build on a presupposed natural religiosity as reflex of a natural revelation, we heartily concur.

Further, if, and in as far as, his demand for a religionless Christianity<sup>4</sup> is a condemnation of a one-sided introverted ecclesiastical life, we would willingly support him.

Finally, if, and in as far as, he means that the Christian must not appropriate specifically Christian qualities which would divide him from the non-Christian but that he must throw in his lot with the non-Christian – certainly.

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of psychology as specialized science in Chs. 9 and 10.

<sup>2</sup> Bonhoeffer, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

These ideas are, however, concentrated in the self-contradictory expression 'religionless Christianity', whereas it would perhaps be better to centre them in the distinction between the objective and the subjective truth of faith. Bonhoeffer's constant concern is really the rejection of a false subjectivity. This rejection and, what is more important, its positive correction, lies in the distinction we have indicated. In this context let us repeat what has already been said.

Here the unity of truth is of primary importance. Truth has various forms: the truth of a statement, the truth of a scientific theory, the truth of a science as a whole, the truth of a person; the truth of faith; the truth of God. When we say that the unity of truth is of primary importance we are saying two things: first, that the word truth has a similar meaning in these various aspects though it shines through them in varying brightness; secondly, that truth is not a genus which has as its species, on an equal logical level, the forms of truth we have mentioned and others beside; but that the fullness of truth is the truth of God.

What is then the identical meaning of the word truth which is to be found in all these forms? We have phenomenologically investigated the form taken by truth in a simple statement and the truth of a science. We found that truth has primarily the character of an objective utterance, and secondarily the character of a subjective participation in this objective utterance. We must therefore distinguish between objective and subjective truth. Subjective truth is only possible on the basis of objective truth, namely when a subject exists which partakes in the objective truth. The objective truth exists even when there is no human subject directed towards it; it is therefore independent of subjective truth; in order to avoid the appearance of a correlation with subjective truth it might also be called 'ontic' truth. This ontic truth has the phenomenal character of utterance; but of a defective utterance – an utterance, namely, where the speaker is not part of the phenomenal content.

We have just spoken of the truth of faith. Here too it is necessary to distinguish between objective (ontic) truth and subjective truth. Here too objective truth is utterance; but now no longer defective, but the full utterance of God in Jesus Christ, as the *telos* of his utterance in the history of Israel, with its accompaniment of the prophetic word. It is, further, an utterance which is not only the systematic whole of everything that is worthy of theoretical know-

ledge, but is also the unity of the divine work in creation, reconciliation, redemption and consummation. This objective truth is Jesus Christ.

When we say that Jesus Christ is the Truth, or when we say he is the Word, or when we say he is the Son, the words Truth, Word, Son, take on their real, primal meaning. They are primal words. The origin of their meaning does not lie in perception, but in God's revelation, in his utterance of himself in Jesus Christ. It is here too that the origin of the categories – which are the designation of being – is to be found. Where then does the autonomy or coming of age of the world remain?

The objective, ontic truth of faith is Jesus Christ. The subjective truth of faith is here too participation in this ontic truth. Subjective truth is consequently basically secondary, dependent and not *a priori*. It is not the important thing, but that does not mean that we can or should live without subjectivity.

To recapitulate, the subjective truth of faith comes about in three ways:

1. Man, every man, participates as such in Christ. Human existence is not 'thrownness', but being called in the Word of creation which is not only past but also present and future. And man has an existential part not only in the Word of creation but also in reconciliation, redemption and consummation. *This* subjective truth of faith, as participation in the objective truth, therefore exists even without faith. Human existence can have determining factors which it does not recognize and which it perhaps knows nothing about. But this lack of recognition and lack of knowledge must be called minority, not coming-of-age.

2. The subjective truth of faith is in addition (or not really in addition since it includes the first point) participation through the Holy Spirit in the objective truth which is in Jesus Christ. It is as such indivisibly individual and corporate: the individual is only individual as a member of that corporate body which is the body of Christ. It is in this connection that the questions of the call to, or the wrongness of, secularization arise: if the life of the community is constituted through participation in Christ as the utterance of God, then its solidarity with, and its contrast to, the *aiōn houtos* is also determined by Christ's solidarity with and contrast to it. Now the church is the organized form in which the community appears. Consequently in all questions relating to the required or forbidden secularization of

church life it must never be forgotten that the *aiōn houtos* also participates, in the first sense, in the objective truth.

3. Participation in the objective truth as conceptuality also belongs, as a subsidiary factor, to the subjective truth of faith. That Jesus Christ is the truth, the utterance of God, *also* means that in him God is verbally expressible. And if faith is participation in Christ, that *also* means that the believer (remembering here the indivisibility of individual and community) can express the truth in language. It is this that makes possible creeds and dogmatics. Even if this conceptuality is a subsidiary part of the truth, it none the less penetrates everything and without it life is impossible – both the life of the church and human life as such.

We have said that the objective or ontic truth of faith is Jesus Christ and that the subjective truth of faith is the (threefold) participation in this objective truth. Now if we turn this distinction of subjective and objective into a hard and fast ontic division, as if man were essentially subject and God essentially object, everything becomes confused. God can be the object of human thought, but he is the subject of his own actions. The distinction between subject and object is not applicable to the personal confrontation of God and man at all; in this personal encounter, in the (asymmetrical) I-Thou relationship, there *is* no subject and object. 'I' cannot be called the subject and 'Thou' the object.

A second confusion to be avoided is to interpret the word subjective in the sense of 'relative', so that subjective truth, instead of standing over against objective truth, is related to other subjective convictions of truth. Subjective truth would then mean an opinion without evidence.

Truth is not an entity (and subjective truth is therefore not a subject in itself); truth is utterance of being, belonging to God and coming from God. (God is therefore subject of the objective truth and in part also object.) This is as much as to say that the coordinate system (the presupposition of our thought) is what we called the (mental) sphere of being, which is the saving activity of God in creation, reconciliation, redemption and consummation. We cannot go into the confusions that may possibly arise here. Being is the being of God. It is not timeless substance and is not without effects. Barbarous concepts of this kind are far removed from our thoughts. And the difficulty is that there is an 'and'; being is also the being of creation, on which God has conferred a limited independence.

There is no avoiding this difficulty in the presupposition (which we have not set up) – evil, sin and history. The saving activity of God in *all* its ramifications calls the created being into existence and has its origin in the being of God. It is for this reason that we called our presupposition of the saving activity of God the sphere of being. Thinking *has* this presupposition, this coordinate system – which does not mean that thinking also *recognizes* it; or even that if it is recognized, thinking always relates what is thought to it. Sometimes we take as a basis a false system of coordinates; often we confine ourselves to limited cadres. In our time, the false, quasi-universal system of coordinates is ‘Reality’. We are not fated to think in terms of ‘Reality’ today; it is, however, an illusion which has taken on the dangerous appearance of being a matter of course.

Bonhoeffer speaks of the autonomy or coming of age of the world as if this were a true presupposition. ‘. . . The only way to be honest is to recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur*.’<sup>1</sup> What else is this than the presupposition of ‘Reality’? ‘An infinite universe . . . is self-subsisting *etsi deus non daretur*.’<sup>2</sup> That is then the finish. It is impossible to conceive how Bonhoeffer can continue ‘And this is just what we do see – before God!’<sup>3</sup> Is this ‘seeing before God’ not part of life in the world? And can one see something ‘before God’ *etsi deus non daretur*?

If reality as the self-subsisting universe is the true presupposition and if it is therefore only honest to see and accept the fact that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur* – then this reality and we ourselves as a piece of it are God-less (without God, not against God; in Bonhoeffer several times *quaternio terminorum*). The presupposition of the Gospel is that God presupposes himself as the creator, reconciler, redeemer and finisher. Either one or the other. Both the one and the other – that won’t do.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

## 30 · Paul Tillich: Being-Itself, the Ground of our Being

In the last chapter of his book *Honest to God*,<sup>1</sup> which he calls 'Recasting the Mould', Robinson writes: 'It will doubtless seem to some that I have by implication abandoned the Christian faith and practice altogether. On the contrary, I believe that *unless* we are prepared for the kind of revolution of which I have spoken it *will come* to be abandoned. And that will be because it is moulded, in the form we know it, by a cast of thought that belongs to a past age – the cast of thought which, with their different emphases, Bultmann describes as 'mythological', Tillich as 'supranaturalist' and Bonhoeffer as 'religious'.<sup>2</sup>

This 'cast of thought' belonging to a past age was successively: God 'over and above the sum of things' (with the not entirely avoidable notion of 'an old man in heaven') and God 'beyond the world' as "the highest Being" – out there, above and beyond this world, existing in his own right alongside and over against his creation'.<sup>3</sup>

'What looks like being required of us, reluctant as we may be for the effort involved, is a radically new mould, or *meta-morphosis* of Christian belief and practice. Such a recasting will, I am convinced, leave the fundamental truth of the Gospel unaffected. But it means that we have to be prepared for *everything* to go into the melting – even our most cherished religious categories and moral absolutes. And the first thing we must be ready to let go is our image of God himself.'<sup>4</sup>

What then are the new categories which can provide the mould for the Gospel today? Robinson is very cautious. He inclines most closely to 'Tillich's description of God as the "depth" of life' but 'simply as an illustration of one alternative'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (SCM Press, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.



Robinson interprets Tillich as follows: 'Yet we are not here dealing simply with a change of symbolism, important as that may be. This is not just the old system in reverse, with a God "down under" for a God "up there". When Tillich speaks of God in "depth", he is not speaking of another Being *at all*. He is speaking of "the infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being", of our ultimate concern, of what we take seriously without reservation.'<sup>1</sup> 'God is, by definition, ultimate reality. And one cannot argue whether ultimate reality *exists*. One can only ask what ultimate reality is like – whether, for instance, in the last analysis what lies at the heart of things and governs their working is to be described in personal or impersonal categories. Thus, the fundamental theological question consists not in establishing the "existence" of God as a separate entity but in pressing through to what Tillich calls "the ground of our being".'<sup>2</sup>

So much for Robinson. Let us now turn to Tillich himself. We will confine ourselves to his *Systematic Theology*.<sup>3</sup>

'The statement that God is being-itself is a non-symbolic statement. It means what it says directly and properly; if we speak of the actuality of God, we first assert that he is not God if he is not being-itself. . . . However, after this has been said, nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic. As we already have seen, God as being-itself is the ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure himself. He *is* the structure; that is, he has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being. Therefore, if anything beyond this bare assertion is said about God, it no longer is a direct and proper statement, no longer a concept. It is indirect, and points to something beyond itself. In a word, it is a symbolic.'<sup>4</sup>

Tillich says, therefore: God is being. The meaning of this statement can only be that of a *definitio realis*. Being is not a predicative divine attribute among other possible attributes; what we mean by the word God is the equivalent of being. We can also reverse the statement. Being is what we mean by the word God, when we avoid any additional symbolism. ('The religious word for what is called the ground of being is God.')

<sup>5</sup>

What are we now to understand by the statement 'that he is not God if he is not being-itself'? Or, in another place, 'God does not

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Nisbet, 1953-65).

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 238-239.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence.<sup>1</sup> *He is being-itself.* We see only one possibility: the impersonal form of being-itself is the non-symbolic truth of what is symbolically indicated by the personal 'he'. This is confirmed by another passage: 'The relation between the ground of being and its revelatory manifestations can be expressed only in terms of finite actions originating in a highest being and transforming the course of finite events. This is unavoidable. In the same way the relation of the ground of revelation to those who receive revelation can be conceived only in personal categories; for that which is the ultimate concern of a person cannot be less than a person, although it can and must be more than personality. Under these circumstances the theologian must emphasize the symbolic character of all concepts which are used to describe the divine act of self-revelation. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

How are we now to reconcile 'God is being-itself' and 'that which is the ultimate concern of a person cannot be less than a person, although it can be and must be more than personality'? It must be admitted that here our attempt to understand Tillich breaks down. How can 'being-itself' 'be more than personality'? We cannot possibly regard being-itself, which is being in 'everything that has being' as more than personal. Is it perhaps pre-personal? That could only be so if being preceded existence in the sense that it *crystallized* itself in existence. Being-itself could then be called pre-personal if it took on a structure, the structure of personality, for example. It could then *become* a person. The only thing gained by this, however, would be that being could be called pre-personal; it would still not be more than personality. More than personality postulates more, not less, structure than personality. And (the decisive point) being does not precede the thing-that-has-being. That was the conception of mediæval extreme realism or logical pantheism.

Does the view that being crystallizes itself into the-thing-that-has-being none the less play a part in Tillich's thought and does he confuse pre-personal and more-than-personal? There is a suggestion in the passage quoted that this may be so. 'As we already have seen, God as being-itself is the ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure himself. He *is* the structure; that is, he has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 238-239.

Tillich here points to earlier passages ('As we already have seen'); but these also merely state what he states here, namely:

1. Being (He; God) is the ground of the ontological structure of what has being.

2. He *is* the structure.

3. He has the *power of determining* this structure.

Thus being as ground, being as structure and being as power are all abruptly absorbed into pure being. This too is still all non-symbolic, although here is the borderline; beyond it speech becomes symbolic.

Being according to Tillich has therefore really become structure. Our heads begin to reel at these mutually incompatible definitions. How can the ground of structure as the power of determining structure be at the same time structure *itself*? And we become still more confused when we are faced with the question that Tillich himself puts: 'Is not the term "structure of being" a contradiction in terms, saying that that which is beyond every structure itself has a structure?'<sup>1</sup>

Where does this power of being suddenly come from? The solution of all these puzzles is, in our opinion, not far to seek. The coordinate system of Tillich's thought is not 'being-itself' at all but the concrete sphere of the saving activity of God, which we, somewhat rashly perhaps compared with Tillich, have also called the sphere of being. This being is the being of God. It does not precede God; God is the concrete origin of all content; from him being too can be inferred. God is not being, he is *the* being; but God is not God because he is the being. We may as well add here that God is personal because he is God. God cannot be defined by and summed up under the meaning of the word person which is familiar to us in other connections. It is for this reason that the present writer has said that 'God, the being, is not a person'.<sup>2</sup> But it is God who determines the meaning of the word person and in this sense God *is* a person. We shall return to this point.

Tillich too thinks in the sphere of thought which is set by the saving activity of God. He does not himself recognize this, however, for the only possibility of preventing God from being summed up under concepts familiar from other contexts and thus turned into a 'highest Being . . . beyond this world' (to quote Robinson), whereby he is no longer that which is 'our ultimate concern' – the only possibility of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> A. E. Loen, *De vaste grond*, p. 197.

preventing this is according to Tillich the coordinate system of being-itself, being in every being, which is now made primal.

This promises great advantages, for instance apologetic ones. Being in every being cannot be denied. The invitation to remove to the depths is hard to refuse, for in this way the artificial difficulty of the rigid conceptual scheme of supernaturalism and the flatness of naturalism are both avoided. The doctrine of the alienation of being links up with existential ontology and difficulties in the concept of original sin are avoided. And so on.

But it is none the less impossible. It is an illusion to think that the 'empty tautology that being is being'<sup>1</sup> could be turned into the system of coordinates for dogmatic thought. The system of coordinates or presupposition of Tillich's thinking is not being-itself but the concrete saving activity of the living God. Tillich's exposition is only comprehensible if we start from this presupposition, from this plenitude, on the basis of this true system of coordinates. This comprehension, however, demands an unwavering criticism of Tillich's own apparent substantiation and a hermeneutical transposition which is frequently unsuccessful.

We have already seen how at the very beginning of his argument Tillich goes beyond the system of coordinates which he has just explicitly postulated, absorbing elements which only make sense when related to a quite other scheme. But a system of coordinates is exclusive. When Tillich postulates the system of being-itself he is explicitly denying the other from which he none the less draws. In the course of this, the elements he has absorbed alter their character, for they have become detached from their own system of coordinates of the saving activity of God, and yet cannot be sufficiently transformed for them to fit into the system of being-itself. The first of these elements was that being-itself is the ground or basis. That is a radical alteration of 'God is the creator', but it is an unsuccessful attempt at transformation into being-itself. The second element was 'being itself is the power of being'. This is a radical alteration of 'God acts', but an unsuccessful attempt at transformation into being-itself. The third element was 'being-itself is the structure of being'. That is – according to the further development, which involves the whole of the *Systematic Theology* – a radical alteration of 'sin and reconciliation' but an unsuccessful attempt at transformation into being-itself. All these elements are absorbed in the form of pure abstractions, which

<sup>1</sup> Tillich, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 164.

is not, however, sufficient to graft them on to being-itself. As the *Systematic Theology* proceeds, more and more is absorbed under the colour of symbolic language. When enough has been absorbed, and if we can forget that symbols are being used, Tillich has much to say, much that is constructive and illuminating as well as much that is critical and testing.

Our attempt to understand Tillich has become a critical transposition. We started from what Tillich says about being-itself and were led from that to what he does not say about symbolic language, namely that it is a cloak for the absorption of theological content into an inappropriate ontological system of coordinates. In the course of this we are in danger of being unjust to Tillich's own statements about symbolic speech and knowledge. We must therefore check whether we have succumbed to this danger.

If we start from what Tillich himself says about symbolic language and knowledge, we could arrive at new insight into what he means by being-itself. The starting-point in being-itself and symbolic language are two facets of the same stumbling-block in Tillich. We must therefore look at his exposition of the necessity and truth of symbolic language and knowledge. We shall do this through a quotation from what Tillich says immediately after the passage quoted above (p. 196). The core of that part of the *Systematic Theology* which gives rise to our observations takes up hardly more than a page. In the following quotation from the second half of this page<sup>1</sup> we are taking the liberty of substituting for the first sentence ('The general character of the symbol has been described') a part of the earlier description of the symbol to which Tillich is here referring.

'The knowledge of revelation, directly or indirectly, is knowledge of God and therefore is analogous or symbolic. . . . In this sense *analogia entis*, like "religious symbol", points to the necessity of using material taken from finite reality in order to give content to the cognitive function in revelation. This necessity, however, does not diminish the cognitive value of revelatory knowledge. The phrase "only a symbol" should be avoided, because nonanalogous or non-symbolic knowledge of God has *less* truth than analogous or symbolic knowledge. The use of finite materials in their ordinary sense for the knowledge of revelation destroys the meaning of revelation and deprives God of his divinity.'<sup>2</sup> We may now proceed to the later quotation. 'Special emphasis must be laid on the insight that symbol

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131.

and sign are different; that, while the sign bears no necessary relation to that to which it points, the symbol participates in the reality of that for which it stands. The sign can be changed arbitrarily according to the demands of expediency, but the symbol grows and dies according to the correlation between that which is symbolized and the persons who receive it as a symbol. Therefore, the religious symbol, the symbol which points to the divine, can be a true symbol only if it participates in the power of the divine to which it points.

‘There can be no doubt that any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about him. It transcends the content of this segment, although it also includes it. The segment of finite reality which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it also is affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself.

‘The crucial question must now be faced. Can a segment of finite reality become the basis for an assertion about that which is infinite? The answer is that it can, ‘because that which is infinite is being-itself and because everything participates in being-itself’.<sup>1</sup>

There is therefore no question that for Tillich every concrete statement about God must be symbolic; because such a statement is using material which is taken from finite experience in order to say something about the infinite. As we have seen, he himself, however, *also* speaks non-symbolically about God: he is being-itself, the ground of our being, the potency of being which resists non-being, the structure of being. It is therefore not a characteristic of human language or concept to have to use material taken from finite experience in order to say something about God. But why is it then necessary to make other, *concrete* and thus, according to Tillich, apparently essentially symbolic statements about God? Evidently because the divine truth goes beyond what can be non-symbolically said about it. ‘Non-symbolic knowledge of God has *less* truth than . . . symbolic knowledge.’<sup>2</sup> But how can symbolic speech and knowledge participate in this divine truth – the truth which cannot be expressed non-symbolically?

The answer is that it *cannot* do so, for symbolic speech and know-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131.



ledge, which Tillich holds to be the only possibility, is speech and knowledge which is accompanied by the thought, 'God is different, but who he is cannot be either stated or known'. Symbolic knowledge is a contradiction in terms. For if we do not know what a symbol symbolizes it is not a symbol. Symbolic knowledge therefore presupposes non-symbolic knowledge of what is symbolized, and if this non-symbolic knowledge is not present the symbolic ceases to be knowledge. A sign too is only a sign if we know what it is a sign of; it can then certainly be a sign but it has no cognitive function.

Tillich has another view. 'The answer is that it can because that which is infinite is being-itself and because everything participates in being-itself.' That does not answer the question, however, for speech about God and knowledge of him is not a matter of participation in being but of participation in truth, for truth is the *utterance* of being. Conversely speech and knowledge, i.e. participation in the truth, does not necessarily imply participation in being. Even if we attempt to concur with Tillich that God is being-itself, the ground of our being, it is still incomprehensible why participation in being should make possible symbolic speech about God and symbolic knowledge of him.

But we cannot in fact follow Tillich the whole way that leads up to this incomprehensible conclusion. The most important premise is: every being participates in being-itself. Since Tillich wishes to show the possibility of symbolic speech and knowledge, he is here speaking non-symbolically. Every being participates in being-itself. Now we would be the first to affirm the mystery of being; this mystery lies in the fact that being is the being of God and that created being is *not* the being of God. But that is not what Tillich says. When Tillich invites us to understand non-symbolically the statement 'everything participates in being itself', we can only see in it something self-evident, an analytical judgment, an automatism: every being is a being and as such participates in being. At the same time we are bound to see something quite different in it, namely that every being participates in God – but this God is not the God of revelation, for about him according to Tillich we can only speak symbolically, and here we are not speaking symbolically. We are not allowed to see anything in the statement 'every being participates in being' other than an analytical judgment. The attempt to understand Tillich leads to inner disruption. What he says about symbolic speech and knowledge does not allow us to arrive at any view other than the one we have formu-



lated: that under the cloak of symbolic knowledge and speech he absorbs in the course of his exposition more and more from another presupposition than the one from which he avowedly starts.

With this we must end our discussion of Tillich. What we must not do, however, is to push on one side the question which Tillich's work and Robinson's book have raised. It is true that we have already repeatedly come across this question in various forms and have answered it: we must not, however, take the credit of having found final answers which can now be neatly filed away.

The question, as we know, was, in its simplest form: *is God an independent being, an independent being who is a person?*

We would be glad to give a straight answer to this question. We cannot do so, however, for 'yes' as well as 'no' would accept both the question and its implicit presuppositions. The question does, however, imply one presupposition which we simply cannot accept, namely that we know the meaning of the words 'being' and 'person' and that the problem is whether these meanings can be applied to God; and further, that the familiar meanings of being and person reflect the being of this world and the human person, so that the problem is whether God can be classified with this otherwise familiar being or is a sub-classification of these otherwise familiar persons. We cannot accept this presupposition and we are therefore unable to give either a straight 'yes' or a straight 'no' to the question.

What then is the position? How can this presupposition be corrected? What is the norm and source of knowledge of the meanings of being and person?

It is God who is the norm and source of knowledge, not the things or persons of this world. The real meaning of being and person is anchored in God. That means that we know him in a more real and primal sense than we do our neighbour or ourselves. If we believe that, on the contrary, we know the beings or persons which belong to this world (for which read 'Reality') in a more real and primal sense this is once more the presupposition of 'Reality' as a self-contained whole of effects, now reduplicated in a self-contained whole of meanings. When we said that 'Reality' does not exist and must be replaced by the sphere of thought given with the saving activity of God, a corresponding 'Copernican revolution' was implicit in relation to the origin and source of knowledge of meanings. By replacing 'Reality' by the sphere of being, i.e. the sphere of the saving activity of God, we also achieve insight into the way in which

'primal' words, such as 'being' and 'person', are the origin and source of knowledge of our concepts.

They are not so in the sense of a natural theology, which thinks that it must draw all concepts from 'Reality', even those which point beyond this 'Reality'. Nor are they derived from the experience qualified by the self-contained reality. Finally, they are not simply there, in innate form.

The *sources of knowledge* are the primal words, derived from the saving activity of God, in the operation of the Holy Spirit. They lie in a participation in the truth which is also conceptual. They lie in an 'existence' knowledge (existing knowledge and knowledge of existence in one) which is not a natural datum but is conferred through the fact that human existence is called into being through the Word, or speech, of God.

The primal words are *primal* in that their real meaning is housed with God so that they can only find their significance in his revelation and not in the world.

Here a question arises – the reversal of the question which in Aquinas or Cajetan led to the doctrine of *analogia entis*, namely: if the real meaning of primal words like 'being' and 'person' is with God, how far can we say that the world or man is a being and that man is a person?

The answer is that the being and personality of God is known from his revelation, i.e. from his saving activity. The being of man and the world and the personality of man is different from the being and personality of God: it is not primal; it is dependent. God witnesses to his being and his personal being in his speech. *Man* receives his being and his personal being in that he must and may answer to the speech of God. The difference between the being or personal being of God and that of man is the difference between the speech of God and the answer of man. It is the difference between creator and creature, Father and sinner, reconciler and regenerate.

The difference between the being of God and the *world* (including man) cannot be determined in this way because the world as a whole does not answer. God in his creative speech calls the world into existence and thereby confers on it independence of being, freedom. This marks the difference between the being of God and the being of the world: not the division of a higher unity but *primal* being and *created* being. In this lies the core of all those questions which we have continually come up against: the risk that God takes when he

gives the world (including man) *being* which is *independence of being, freedom*. How far does this risk go? What is the relation of the divine foreknowledge, providence and predestination to the freedom of the creature which God respects? Where is the borderline of this respect and hence of the creature's freedom? These are questions so difficult that we are perhaps tempted to look for a 'new mould'. Are we speaking of God in unduly human terms? Must everything be revolutionized?

Must everything be revolutionized? In what sense can that be asked? Surely only in this sense: do these human terms lie within the truth of God, who presupposes himself in his saving activity, or must they be revolutionized *in order to become so*? Not in Robinson's sense when he says: 'I have simply been engaged upon a probing operation – trying to see at certain fundamental points of faith and practice what it may mean . . . to question one whole set of presuppositions and feel towards another in its place.'<sup>1</sup> This juggling with presuppositions is not open to us because God sets himself as presupposition before us. The test of the meaning of our words is not uncertain: it is offered to us in revelation.

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

## Conclusion

The conception and evaluation of secularization represented in this book differ from the usual ones.

Whether secularization is welcomed or whether it is accepted as unavoidable the emphasis is generally laid on the fact that the Gospel has freed the world for rational activity in theory and practice. Rational things are out of place in a world dominated by demons and rational procedure is therefore impossible. That was the world as the Gospel found it. The Christian proclamation, however, freed the world of demons and thereby cleared the way for its theoretical and practical control.

Up to this point we would agree, though with the proviso that the clearing away of an obstacle to rational activity does not positively explain that rational activity; and further, that the concept of rationality demands a clearer definition.

As so often happens, however, this basically correct insight is turned into an absolute, thereby altering its character. There is a general opinion nowadays that the godless world demands a godless science. The world, in as far as it is the object of scientific activity, is, it is said, godless; that is to say God simply does not enter into the picture, either as a being or as an object of knowledge. It is a departure from pure objectivity if the name of God is introduced into a scientific discussion. Science must have no presuppositions; the presupposition 'God' is like any other presupposition, unscientific. Science is based on experience, and scientific experience is essentially secular, confined to this world, godless.

Here we must disagree. First it is exasperating when this line of approach is taken from the Christian side, while at the same time God is professed. That is inconsistent, and inconsistency is more apt to lead to disaster than consistency. Is there in fact any area left vacant by the alleged *qua talis* of godless science where the acknow-

ledgment of God would have any point? This would be to hold science too cheap. Every conceptuality which cannot be scientifically accepted must be discredited. And anyone who says that the Christian creed is not conceptual does not know what he is saying.

We should like, however, to press for consistency in the opposite direction: from the objective conceptuality of faith to the objective conceptuality of science.

Here we must object that the view that we are combating lumps all science together on the same level. We would agree that the concepts of theoretical physics are, within their own limits, up to the present godless. If we take the presuppositions into account, however, even that is not true. And it would be a remarkable fact if the conceptuality of anthropology and psychology could remain godless. That would mean that God had nothing to do with the being of man. We have touched on this and have also considered the case of history and historical scholarship, where the situation is rather different. Scientific conceptuality must conform to material truth. If that is forgotten, all other sciences will be viewed as imperfect theoretical physics and all other things as part of inorganic nature.

Further, we deny that a science without presuppositions is possible, and consequently that the view we are attacking is itself without presuppositions; there can be no science – not even mathematics or logic – which deceives itself into thinking that it rests on completely independent axioms and can confine itself in its development within the concepts set by these. Every science as a piece of human behaviour presupposes the material content of this behaviour in the comprehensive unity of subject and object – what is entirely usual. What, however, is this ‘entirely usual’? Its content is removed from the human power of control, but one thing is certain: nothing can be extracted from the presupposition which is not implicit in it. If the presupposition is not Christian, nothing Christian can be extracted from it. If it is Christian, however, obviously not every branch of scholarship must stress its Christian aspect – no discipline exhausts the presupposition by drawing on it for its concepts. Now it is not the job of a specialized science to interpret the presupposition conceptually; but it is none the less possible to gather a science’s implicit interpretation of the presupposition from the concepts it itself forms. This is in fact essential for the critical evaluation of the truth of a discipline. In individual cases – physics, biology, psychology, history – we have more or less applied this process with varying results. We had no



fault to find with physics and considerable fault to find with psychology. The interpretation (again implicit) of the presupposition which is displayed (a) in the contemporary climate of opinion of which the specialized sciences are a part and (b) in the view that the godless world demands a godless science is, however, different from the implicit interpretation of the presupposition shown in the formulation of concepts of a specialized science. We found ourselves asked to explain this last interpretation as that of a self-contained reality. But that is simply a false interpretation of the presupposition. We, on the other hand, hold that the true interpretation of the presupposition is the saving activity of God, which we (by no means incidentally) also found ourselves forced to call the sphere of being (the being of God is in his act, the being of the world through his act).

That is also of decisive importance for the correct understanding of secularization.

First it must be noticed that although we have confined our discussion to science and learning, the implications of this revolution in the interpretation of the presupposition are by no means limited to these. The being of man (as being called to answer in the saving activity of God) is determined by the presupposition; the existence of man is also determined by his interpretation of the presupposition in all aspects of his activity, not only in science. Conceptuality, above all the conceptuality formed by the interpretation of the presupposition, enters into the truth or falsity of existence as one of the fundamental elements.

What, now, is secularization? We have given two definitions. First of all a superficial one, demanding rectification: secularization is the historical process by which the world is de-divinized (as far as the human consciousness is concerned). The cadre in which the world was de-divinized (i.e. made god-free, or 'godless' in the neutral sense) is that of self-contained reality. By viewing this cadre as a false interpretation of the presupposition we did not mean that the world in actual fact shows divine characteristics. That view was held within this very cadre: the world as first presupposition. The correction could only emerge later – namely from the fact that the true presupposition is the saving activity of God. It is this that gives us the second definition, which was taken from the Bible: secularization is being conformed to this world, the world which rebels against the fact that 'from him and through him and in him are all things'. The 'form of this world' is precisely 'Reality', which has absorbed time

but is itself timeless, having withdrawn from the dynamic of God's saving activity.

The view here formulated may be attacked as fundamentalism or a positivism of revelation. Attacks in the rear from the side of secularization make the writer particularly sensitive to such frontal assaults. But what is the alternative? Are we to deny that according to the Bible the saving activity of God from creation to consummation is the true presupposition? Are we so intimidated by the self-evidentness of this world (*tou aiōnos toutou*) with its immanent potential conceptuality that in our acceptance of the Gospel we feel the weight of the conceptuality of the Gospel pressing on us like a nightmare, and therefore deny it? It is this very schizophrenia which is set up as a disaster for the church's proclamation today. Scholarship, it is said, particularly the natural sciences, makes it necessary for the church to withdraw to neutral ground. We should realize that it is unnecessary to be so intimidated, and that the conceptual system of the world today is questionable in the highest degree.



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